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# The Forsaken

By

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" "

"DEINE SEELE ABER WIRD EIN SCHWERDT  
DURCHDRINGEN"



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## PREFACE.

PEOPLE of soft sensibilities, of narrow prejudices or sickly sentimentality, as well as all mollycoddles and weaklings, are advised not to read this book. Aged spinsters of puritanical proclivities would be shocked; pious preachers, whose religion is tied down to old forms and creeds, would say that the ethics of the book were monstrous; prudes would cry out that the story was frightfully immodest.

It is written for people who can bear to read the truth, no matter how hard it cuts, nor how brutally frank is its presentation. Those who cry out about the divorce evil and who shout for reform of divorce laws—meaning laws to prevent and reduce divorces—need to be told of the causes that make divorces not only right, but really obligatory upon occasions.

Marriages are made by individuals, not by churches; if the union goes wrong the individuals are the ones who suffer. To force them to continue to cohabit after love has departed is itself a crime. To uphold as sacred the tying of a woman, a mother, to the “bed and board” of a bestial man, whom she hates, is one of the most awful crimes that a foolish priesthood has ever allowed itself to foist on its unthinking followers.



## PREFACE

The church in bygone days has burned martyrs at the stake. Is that any worse than to refuse a woman divorce from a man suffering from a vile disease? We regard the burning of martyrs as the height of barbarism. A future age will look upon us who advocate restriction of divorce as on a parallel with ancient inquisitors and users of the rack and torture.

The writer of this book has dared to tear aside the veil of modesty in the opening chapters and to tell the lurid tale of what one woman did whose church denied her a right to divorce, and as a consequence the right to be a happy mother.

Let no follower of that church or of any other feel that it is singled out for attack. The author has no quarrel with the church, as such, but only with the teaching of immoral doctrine by the church. They may place this book on the Expurgata list if they will, but some will read it, and some will heed the lesson; and some day some one in each church will have the courage to rise and say, "We are doing wrong. Let us mend our ways, and no longer blight the lives of the mismated by decreeing against divorce."

Let no reader infer from the foregoing that this book is a plea for general divorce. Where the breach between husband and wife is not too serious, by all means let every power be exerted to heal it;



## PREFACE

but when aversion has turned to hate, when loathing has succeeded indifference, let the bonds be severed simply and quickly. The only right of the State in the matter is that the children of such unhappy unions are not neglected. The only right of the church is to bless the pair, wedded or single.

THE PUBLISHER.







# The Forsaken

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## CHAPTER I.

THE groom, a slender dark-haired man of thirty, whose scalp was visible through dry crinkled hair, straightened up his shoulders like a tired wayfarer who has just reached a goal. The ceremony was over. The fair-haired bride slid her glove hand into her husband's arm and walked with bowed head toward the entrance of the church.

The odor of rapidly decomposing flowers filled the air. A breeze from the open door blew the trailing veil back from her face. A bluish discoloring vein near the outer angle of the eyelid stood out in contrast to the thin indefinitely colored eyebrow.

She sniffed the fresh warm air from the door through transparent nostrils. The soft white fabric of her gown rose with the breath. At the root of the neck a slight elevation outlined the collar bone; a pinkish hue suffused the white cheek.

A ray of sunlight filtered through the stained glass window, with an added red from the gown of the pain-racked mother gazing tearfully at the bleed-



ing feet of the Christian Saviour. It fell on the groom's sparsely covered brow, enhancing a copper-colored daub at the roots of the hair close to the temple. Its brilliancy made him wince. The shadow of a fluted column supporting the organ loft caused him to look up. His eyes met those of a man leaning against the door frame. He drew back for an instant, half bowed and walked on.

"Who is that man, Harry?" the bride asked.

"That is Doctor Manteufel."

The usher at the door held up his hand. "Your carriage will be up in a moment," he said to the groom.

The bridal pair halted. The bride stood quite close now to the man at the door. Her eyes ran rapidly over the correctly befrocked figure. To reach his face she had to quite raise her head. Her glance took in the closely cropped light brown beard, went on to a pair of serene, steady gray eyes, over the broad white forehead to the short hair slightly darker than the beard, and already sprinkled with gray at the sides in singular contrast to the smooth unwrinkled cheek.

She looked back at his eyes. They were still fixed steadily on her face. She pressed her angular shoulder close to the groom's arm. The man's eyes left her face, and as though bidden by some compelling force she followed them to the copper colored smudge on her husband's forehead.



A swallow flew into the house of God, circled wildly about, grazing the edge of the crucifix near the pulpit. She followed its fluttering flight and saw it gain freedom through a small square opening in a window showing Christ healing a leper.

"Your carriage is ready, Mrs. Vanderlyn," an usher called from the door. She stopped to gather up the train of her gown, dislodging the petals of a rose at her waist. They fell to the red carpet running out to the curb. The brilliant June sun dazzled on the polished top of the waiting brougham.

A dark-robed priest stepped toward the man at the door frame.

"A glorious summer day, Doctor," she heard him say.

"Yes," came the answer. "June was always a good month for marrying." A deep-toned laugh followed.

"Ever a materialist, Doctor," the priest said. "Some day you will come to us, as, indeed, we come to you now, to be healed and rested. As a servant of God I hope I may greet you."



## CHAPTER II.

MRS. VANDERLYN sat in the nursery of her well appointed home overlooking the park. The nurse held her girl baby, now a trifle over two years of age. The child rebelled against the administration of a gruel-like mess which the nurse was trying to feed it with a heavy, much embossed, silver spoon.

"Take it for mother, dear," Mrs. Vanderlyn pleaded.

The child threw back its misshapen head, showing protruding bumps on the forehead, slightly invaded by thin, whitish hair, through which yellowish crusts were visible.

"I do not think the child hears you, madam," the nurse said. "I have noticed for some time that I had to speak to her several times to make her understand. I am afraid something is wrong with her ears."

"There is always something wrong with her," the mother said peevishly. "It certainly is not for lack of care."

The nurse at last induced the child to open its mouth. The gums were pale, crowned with yellow, notched irregular teeth.

Mrs. Vanderlyn pulled the lace-trimmed shirt over the child's undeveloped limbs. Tears rose to



her eyes. She stepped to the window, drawing aside the curtain. The foliage was taking on autumnal coloring. Quite a number of leaves lay on the grass. A procession of motors and glittering equipages rolled silently along the smooth macadam of the drive. In the foreground near the park wall a boy and girl, pair of brats, about the age of her Martha, were fighting like demons over the possession of a tennis ball. The boy, a sturdy cub, was coming out victoriously. He had the fair-haired girl by the back of the neck and was pummelling her in the rear with a persistence worthy of the cause. A bustling nurse hurried up and pulled the young rascal away. He refused to go and shrieked out vehement protest. The nurse picked him up and the young devil spat in her face. She took him to a bench and wiped her face. The next moment the cub had his arms around her neck and kissed her round face with his full blood-red lips. A tear fell to Mrs. Vanderlyn's gown, and another trembled on the edge of her eyelid.

She had grown stouter in the three years of her married life. The couple had traveled in Europe for six months immediately following their marriage, returning to New York when the probability of the arrival of an offspring had become manifest. When her child was born she did not have any of nature's nourishment for it. This had not been a source of great annoyance to her, however, for many



reasons, not the least of which was the reservation that musicals and teas and luncheons and matinees would not be interfered with. The child did not thrive. Whispered consultations were held by serious looking specialists and the food was changed constantly. In the end an able-looking man, who seemed to have time to walk to his cases, came in. He gave the butler his cane and hat, and ordered him to show him the way to the patient. The butler made a mild protest on the ground that he wished to announce the gentleman.

Whatever leisure the man seemed to allow himself as regards arriving, he did not extend to his method of action after he had arrived. "Get out of the way," he said, "I have no time for that sort of thing," and he mounted the stairs to the nursery without further formality. Mrs. Vanderlyn asked him timidly for his opinion.

"I told your physician what I thought. He is a sort of human phonograph for me in this instance. I am not going over it again."

"Brute," Mrs. Vanderlyn muttered.

After that the child was rubbed with a grayish blue salve and improved until the laundress objected to the stained undergarments.

Mrs. Vanderlyn continued to watch the boy who had beaten his little playmate. He had climbed down from the bench and was rolling the ball he had so strenuously worked for toward the very



girl he had maltreated. The girl was serenely happy, emitting a shrill happy laugh every time her young chastiser successfully rolled the ball between her round bare legs.

"Brougham at the door," came the butler's voice from the hall.

Mrs. Vanderlyn hastened to her room and powdered her face. The added whiteness made the eyebrows still less visible. She took a small toothbrush from a tin box in the upper drawer of her dresser, rubbed it over a dark colored substance in one of its compartments and after moistening the darkened bristles with the end of her tongue, applied the brush to her eyebrows. Fine particles of powder fell to her gown, which she dusted off with a silver-handled brush. Then she lifted the cover of a jar and took up some of its pasty contents on the end of the ring-finger and placed it to her lip. A small portion touched her tongue. It had a metallic taste, as though she had stuck a brass key in her mouth. She took the jar to the window.

"How in the world did I get this?" she muttered. She read the label.

"For Mr. Vanderlyn," it read. "Rub into skin as directed. DR. MANTEUFEL."

She rang the bell. Her maid came in. "Marie, how did this get into my drawer?" she asked, handing the maid the cover of the jar.

The maid studied the cover for a while. "Oh! I



remember," she said presently. "I found it on the floor in Mr. Vanderlyn's dressing-room—I thought it was your rouge pot. I hope I have done nothing wrong."

"No, certainly not. You may go." The maid left the room. Mrs. Vanderlyn continued to scrutinize the little jar. "Strange," she muttered, "it looks familiar, this bluish-gray paste. Why, yes, it's the same as we used on Martha."

She seated herself at the window. What could it mean? Her husband had never mentioned the need of medical attention. He was not particularly robust, but this had not involved any great hardship to her, as she herself was not given to indulgences requiring great endurance. She looked again at the label on the cover.

"Dr. Manteufel? Why, that is the man who looked at me so strangely that day in church."

Every detail of the occurrence flashed through her mind. She rose and walked rapidly to the telephone in the hall, and after consulting the index, gave central Dr. Manteufel's number.

A female voice answered. "If you will give me your name I will see if the doctor is in," the voice said.

Mrs. Vanderlyn hesitated a moment. A plan formulated itself in her mind. "Tell him Mrs. Baxter wishes to speak to him. The matter is quite important."



A moment later the Doctor's full, strong voice asked, "What can I do for you, madam?"

"I wish to consult you regarding my child. When can I see you?"

"Well, it's half after 12 o'clock now and I am not in after one. Is the condition serious? You know I do not do any general practice."

"I just wished your opinion, Doctor. If I come at once will you see me?"

"Yes, if you will hasten."

"My brougham is at the door. I will come at once." She hung up the receiver and rang for her maid. "Tell Lucy to dress the baby at once and let her get ready too. I am going to take the baby with me. Tell her to hurry."

She hastily put on her hat and veil and slipped into a wrap. The jar still stood on the edge of the dresser. She wrapped it in a handkerchief and slipped it into her pocket, placed the cover back into the drawer, closed and locked it. She started for the door, but suddenly stopped, opened a drawer in the dresser, extracted a thick brown veil and put it on over the thin bespeckled one she already wore. A glance in the mirror told her that her features were quite devoid of distinguishing characters.

When she arrived at the Doctor's house, he was just showing out a pale man who looked as though he had been informed of something unpleasant.

"Come in, Madam," the Doctor said. He led the



way into a large well-lighted consulting room. The chamber was simply furnished and devoid of nickel plated awe-inspiring paraphernalia common to the workshop of the physician. A door which stood slightly ajar allowed a glimpse of white enameled table and glass cabinets in the room beyond. At that moment a woman in a white and blue striped gown closed the door. Mrs. Vanderlyn seated herself in a chair with her back to the light.

The Doctor ordered the nurse to seat herself with the child on her lap facing the window. He took a card from a little cabinet to the right of his desk, and as he asked a question he made a note on the card. After finishing his interrogations the Doctor proceeded to examine the child. His examination was not prolonged. He ordered the nurse to take the child into the waiting-room and turning to the visitor said: "You say you are not the mother of this child, Mrs. Baxter. Tell me, do you know the mother?"

"I did, Doctor, but she is dead and the father is dead also. I adopted her when she was only three months old." The doctor walked to the window and looked thoughtfully out on the cement-covered space beyond.

"You have done a rather foolish thing, madam," he began. "However, that is not the point. The child has a rather serious constitutional affliction, one which will require great care and patience to



relieve. Indeed, I cannot promise you complete recovery, though it is quite possible."

"One of the doctors whom I saw prescribed this salve," Mrs. Vanderlyn said. "It helped her a little."

Dr. Manteufel took the jar. "Yes," he answered with a smile, "that is what is generally used in this class of cases."

"Does this affliction come from the parents? mother or father," she asked next.

"From either one," was the answer. "It is a singular thing that a child may inherit it from either, though the afflicted parent might not convey the disease to the other. That is, an afflicted father would have an afflicted child and yet the mother herself might not be infected."

"Does this mean then that the mother could have a healthy child?"

"Yes, by a second husband, but she would probably never have a healthy child from the same man who blessed her with the afflicted one. However, this need not be considered in this instance."

"No, of course not. Thank you very much. What is your fee?" She rose to go. She felt dizzy and faint despite her resolution to carry out the farce.

The Doctor held the door for her to pass out. She paused for a moment on the threshold to gather herself together. The Doctor had already reached his arm out, anticipating her next step. She felt the



pressure of his arm against her waist as she leaned slightly backward. It felt strong and good. As she turned toward him, muttering an apology, her eyes fell on a picture near the window over the chair which she had occupied during the interview. It showed a dark-haired woman bending over a chubby child. A large tear was flowing down the cheek. She remembered having seen it in Europe. The inscription flashed through her mind.

“Deine Swele aber wird ein Schwerdt Durchringen.” A faint sob escaped her lips.

“Sit here on this big chair for a moment,” the Doctor said gently. “You must not give up, there is much to be done for your charge.”

She sank down in a big velour chair and leaned her head backward. The light fell on her veiled face and she turned it away from the window.

A childish voice came from the floor above. “Are you there, daddy?” it called. “Hedwig says lunch is ready.”

The voice was coming nearer. The next moment a fair-haired boy stood at the door of the consulting room. He wore a Russian blouse, black stockings and low-cut shoes. The light from the window fell strongly on his sturdy figure. Mrs. Vanderlyn noticed the square shoulders, the well-poised head, the clear blue eyes. The lad drew back when he saw her.

“You must not rush in like this, son,” the Doctor



said. "People do not like to be disturbed when they come to see me."

The boy bowed slightly and made to withdraw without answering.

"Oh! do not send him away," Mrs. Vanderlyn pleaded. "May I speak to him a moment?"

The Doctor seated himself at his desk and motioned the lad to enter. The boy stepped up to the visitor, drawing his eyebrows together in an effort to penetrate the thick veil.

"What is your name, my handsome little friend?" she asked him with a little catch in her voice.

"My name is Friederich Manteufel. Dad calls me Fritz. I am six years old. Why are you crying? Dad is a great surgeon. He will make you well. You must not cry." He advanced to her knee and placed a slender strong hand on her arm.

She brushed a stray lock of hair from his smooth childish forehead, and let the ends of her gloved fingers rest for a moment against the round cheek. "I am not crying for myself, I am sorry for a little sick girl."

"Then you must see Doctor Holder. He is a baby doctor. Dad called him in when I was sick. I was not very sick. Dr. Holder makes babies well. He has a white, funny old beard and I pulled it when he came the second time. He took me up and spanked my butty; but not very hard. It did not hurt a bit. Daddy says that is what cured me."



The nurse came to the door with little Martha in her arms. The child began to whimper feebly.

"Take her out to the brougham, Lucy," Mrs. Vanderlyn ordered. "I will be out presently."

"Oh! let me see the baby," the lad cried. "Is she sick?"

"Yes, dear," Mrs. Vanderlyn answered. "You must not disturb her."

The nurse passed on. The Doctor rose from his chair. "Come, Fritz," he said, "you have kept the lady long enough."

Mrs. Vanderlyn rose also. "Thank you very much, Doctor. You have a fine boy. His mother must be very proud of him." Her voice had steadied and she stepped quite firmly toward the door.

"His mother is dead, madam," the Doctor answered.

"I am so sorry. Pardon me, I did not know."

"Of course not; don't speak of it. You have my best wishes for your ward." He showed her out of the door, and as she descended the steps she heard a loud high-pitched peal of laughter and hurried footsteps pattering down the hall.



### CHAPTER III.

"DRIVE to St. Agnes church," she ordered the coachman.

Her mind was still confused. She let down the window and the brisk October air seemed to clear away the fog. She reflected: That is what that rheumatism meant—the visit to the baths at France and Germany, the prematurely falling hair, the obstinate persistence of a bruise. She recalled how at Nice her husband had bumped his shin against the step of a railroad car and that it took two months for the contusion to heal. Martha emitted a peevish cry.

"The draft from the window is a little strong," the nurse said.

Mrs. Vanderlyn pulled up the window but she became faint again. It seemed as though her child polluted the air. She lowered the window a few inches and held the strap in her hand.

"I am cold, Mamma!" the child cried, irritably.

A wave of pity came over her. She closed the window and took the child on her lap. This poor innocent piece of clay so unjustly cursed. The brougham pulled up before the church.

"I am going in with Martha," she said. "Wait for me." She mounted the stone steps leading into



the house of God. The empty pews stretched out before her. There was the pulpit, the altar, the deep crimson carpet, the crucifix, and the familiar picture showing Jesus Christ at the last meal.

The child in her arms had become still. It lay now staring vacantly at the vaulted ceiling with its angels floating in the midst of white clouds on an azure background. She walked softly toward the altar. A patch of bright sunlight half-way up the hall caused her to look up. A square space in the stained glass window depicting Christ healing a leper was open just as it was that day, her wedding day. She turned to the window holding the child toward it. Instinctively the intonation of prayer and mode of expression of the testament came from her.

“See, Lord Jesus, my afflicted child. Give me some sign that she may be healed. In this surely I have not sinned. Have mercy, O Saviour, and touch with Thy healing hand, this, my own flesh and blood, that it might cast off this affliction.”

The eyes in the bearded face, with its transparent features, gazed mutely into space as they had since the window was put in. The October wind blew in through the square opening. It felt cold, and she drew the wrap around the child's wasted body and advanced to the altar.

“O Mother Mary, thou who hast suffered with thy Son, be thou merciful to me. Thou who hast



known the pain of begetting the only Son of God, look down and help me. Oh, thou all-wise God, hear my prayer, and let my child be healed."

How still it was; no sound, no guiding voice, no helping hand. She laid the still silent child on the step leading to the altar. The ritual came into her mind. Yes, that was it. She had forgotten the way to ask for help. It came into her mind then.

"O Holy Mary, mother of God, who wert present beneath the cross at the death of thy blessed son Jesus, obtain for me the grace of a happy death, *Ava Maria*"—she stopped, the next portion of the prayer had escaped her memory.

She turned to the nearest pew and took up a testament and found the place at once, "O Glorious St. Michael, prince of the Heavenly host, intercede for me at the hour of my death." She closed the book. "Yes, of course," she muttered, "that is the way out of it all." She closed her eyes. "To be tempted like this in the very presence of God." She took up the child and stole softly toward the door. The light streamed through the red gown of the mother Mary at the foot of the cross and fell on the child's pinched face. A yellowish patch on the side of the forehead took on a pinkish hue. Her mind went back three years. She saw again the tall man leaning against the door frame and followed again his gaze to her husband's face. With her mind's eye she beheld again the copper



tinted patch enhanced by the reddish light. She drew the child's veil over its face, and carried it out to her glittering brougham.

When she reached her home she sent the child to the nursery and retired to her room. "I don't want any lunch," she told the maid who helped her off with her wrap and hat. The maid disappeared. She went to the mirror and gazed at her reflection. The face was quite round, though small, the nose straight, the hair fine but fell in soft curves over the forehead and ears. The eyes were set widely apart, of a pale blue surrounded with light eyelashes. The mouth was small with thin lips, the teeth good, though two of them were filled with gold. She ran her hand down over the bust. It was quite juvenile, yet firm and well rounded. The hips had filled out considerable in the last two years. Her dress-maker had felt justified in omitting certain arts in this regard for some time.

She sat down wearily in the chair near the window.

"I wish God would take her," she thought. The next moment she blamed herself for being a coward. "Yet it can't be that the error of a parent should be fixed upon an innocent child." The vision of her husband came into her mind; she shuddered. "To think I never knew. Better to have strangled her at birth." She rose and paced the floor. Each moment brought a varying emotion.



At one moment violently rebellious at her fate, the next overwhelmed with pity for the child. One minute filled with loathing for her husband, the next pitying him because of his affliction.

The turbulent mental state exhausted her after a time. She ultimately sank down on a divan and buried her face in the cushions. The October day was drawing to a close. Shadows deepened in the room. The maid came in. She ordered her to leave her in darkness. With the setting sun her courage failed. She began to cry.

She heard her husband slowly ascend the stairs. He groped for some time before he found the latch and entered. She heard him stumble over a hassock and fall to his knees. A muttered oath escaped him. When he rose he groped incoordinately about the room, knocking against the furniture. She remained still. At last he found the switch and closed the electric current, flooding the room with light.

"Thank God," he muttered. "This accursed inability to find my way in the dark is getting worse and worse. I wonder what it means. When I cross the street I fear I'll be run over." He stood for a moment facing the wall, getting accustomed to the light. As he turned he saw his wife lying on the sofa. He thought her asleep and touched her lightly on the shoulder. She raised her tear-stained face.



"What in the name of Heaven is the matter? What are you crying about?" he asked anxiously. "Is Martha worse?"

She looked into his thin pale face, at the bald head, the hairless eyelids with their red borders. Revolt rose in her.

"I saw Dr. Manteufel today. I deceived him. He did not know who I am. I have found out all. I want to go away, far away, somewhere, anywhere. To some place where my child will find help. I will go to Lourdes, to the Holy City. I will find help from God." She buried her face in the heavily embroidered cushions. Vanderlyn looked like a man who had been shot in the abdomen. He sat heavily down in a big chair. His lips were pale. "Dr. Manteufel told me I could not communicate the disease," he began weakly. "I did not believe it was hereditary. Not until you were pregnant did I know. Then it was too late."

"Don't add a lie to your fault, Harry," she said. "You must have known."

He broke down completely. "I thought perhaps I would escape. I loved you so. I became a Catholic for you. I did everything you wanted. When you were pregnant I prayed to God that all would be well. When Martha was born she seemed like other children. It can't be that. It's something else." His shoulders heaved with heart-tearing



sobs. Bitter tears rolled down his prematurely wrinkled cheeks.

"It is nothing else but that, as Dr. Manteufel told me. May God forgive you. See the lives you have ruined. I am only twenty-six and I must go on knowing that I cannot bear a healthy child until the end."

"Only my end," he interposed bitterly.

Again a surge of pity for him swept over her. She came to his side. "Do not ask me to forgive it all just yet, Harry; give me time." Her training, her belief dominated her for the moment. "God will show us the way. We must face it as it is." She left the room with a bowed head.

Vanderlyn remained seated, crouched in his chair. Shooting pains darted down his legs. He twitched with pain. The bright light hurt his eyes. He rose painfully and turned off half the bulbs attached to the gilt chandelier. As he reached for the flat switches his fingers grasped the rods beside them and his intent was only accomplished after repeated efforts. As he walked back to the chair he rested his hands on its arms, lowered his body carefully and suddenly flopped into the seat. The entire tragedy passed through his mind—the hilarious wine-stimulated night at the French Ball with his club-mates, a dainty, be-painted girl with golden-hued hair and violet



squinting eyes, belated meal at "Jacques," the finale in the bemirrored flat and breakfast at the inn in Westchester; the maid not quite so alluring, himself encased in a fur overcoat which concealed, in a perfunctory way, the disheveled evening clothes.

Later, the shock of the dawning belief that something was wrong, the interview with the eminent specialist, Manteufel's grave face, his measured words, the hopeful outlook with its skillfully interspersed qualifications. He was twenty-five then, six years ago. Two years later he met Agnes Costello and fell in love with her. What a coward he had been. The terrible months following his wife's pregnancy passed in review like the memory of a hideous nightmare. Well, it was all over now. She would divorce him. No, she couldn't do that; there was her religion. Yet she would be free soon—those pains, the inability to find his way in the dark, his intolerance for light; surely these meant some grave condition. There was a quicker way than that. He crouched in his chair. "No, no, not that. I am too great a coward for that," he muttered.

He saw himself stretched out cold and lifeless. Agnes could marry again. He sat up suddenly. "No, by God, no other man will have her!" A violent darting pain assailed him. He sank back with a stifled groan. He rose slowly and entered his



dressing-room, opened the cupboard with a key and extracted a small vial covered with a red label. He spilled two of the tiny tablets on the palm of his hand, opened his mouth and threw them back into his throat.

“I know I should not resort to this, but the pain and anguish is more than I can bear.” In a few minutes he became drowsy, his eyelids sank over the dull eyes, the opiate lulled the pain. In another few minutes he was asleep. His valet came and put him to bed.



## CHAPTER IV.

FATHER BOVAIRD had had an exceedingly palatable luncheon. His face was flushed and a slight coating of grease covered his engorged purple chin. The Burgundy sent in by an admiring parishioner had made him drowsy and he nodded sleepily in his chair. His fat, sleek housekeeper came in with a card on a black Japanese tray. The tray was devoid of ornamentation and looked a part of the simplicity which the rectory strictly maintained. Father Bovaird sighed and groped for his glasses. He found them at last in the pocket of his soup-bespattered cassock.

The Lenten duties had been very exacting and again his parish had many poor in it. He walked to the window, holding the card in his hand. The warm April sun shone on his bald head as he bowed over the card. "Mrs. Harry Vanderlyn," he read. "Ah, yes, she was Agnes Costello," he mused, puckering up the purple lips. "Her husband became a convert. These sudden twists toward the faith give us lots of trouble." He turned to the housekeeper. "Show the lady in, Josephine."

Josephine pulled down the shade, wiped some cigar ashes from the top of the Rector's desk with her apron, pushed under the desk a cuspidor which



gave evidence of the obstinancy of her employer's catarrh, and went out.

A moment later Mrs. Vanderlyn entered. She looked pale and tired. Her naturally slender figure had become gaunt, and her shoulders looked as though they wanted to tickle the lobes of her ears.

"Be seated, my child," the priest said. "What can I do for you? You look distressed. It is well for you to come to the servant of God. We are ever ready to aid the suffering." He folded his puffy hands over the round protruding abdomen.

"I come to you, Father, on a matter which is exceedingly embarrassing to me," she began hesitatingly. "You will remember I married Harry Vanderlyn three years ago. Since then I have had a daughter. You know all this—you christened the baby."

"Yes, my child, I remember it very well," the priest answered.

She told the priest the foetid tale. He sat listening with his fat hands folded across the rotund abdomen. "You are an unfortunate child," he began, when the woman ceased speaking.

She began to cry softly. "I, too, want to know the blessing of motherhood. I too want to hold my naked children in my arms." For a moment a natural female impulse stimulated her to a dramatic method of expression. She rose and went to the window. "See the trees are budding," she



went on, pointing out of the window. "Soon the lilacs bloom, the leaves sprout, the fields become green. Fertile nature cloaks the earth. Am I to stand by and never know it as it should be? There must be a way, Father." She turned to the priest and held out her slender bony hands.

"You are young," the priest answered quietly. "You must not give up hope. Trust in the Lord."

"My husband will live on until I am too old," she answered, wiping her eyes with care. "I know it is terrible to speak of that, yet I too have a place in life. I will not go to the end like this. God took my Martha two months ago. I had prayed that He might take her many, many times. Now I am alone with this afflicted man. I see no hope anywhere. The Church must have some provision for this."

"You mean divorce?" the priest asked, with darkening face.

"Yes; divorce, liberty, the right to be a woman."

"That is impossible, my child," the priest said, rising from his chair. "That question is as old as the Catholic ritual. It will never be different. These things are decided by wiser heads than ours." He talked rapidly, as though he were repeating words mechanically.

The woman sank helplessly into a chair. "I might have known," she moaned.

"God will show you the way, child," the priest



said more gently. "The way of the Lord is inscrutable. We follow blindly, yet always to a happy goal. Carry your cross—the bliss of the happy end will be the greater for it."

"Very well. If I commit an error which condemns me with myself, the Church will be responsible for it. I will not go on like this." She pulled her veil down and hurriedly entered her brougham.

The priest shrugged his shoulders. "She will get over that. Perhaps it is hard, yet it is for the best." And he turned to the letters lying in a heap at the corner of his desk.

Mrs. Vanderlyn drove up Fifth Avenue. There was a bite of the receding winter in the air, though the sun was warm, and already the attire of men and women was less closely buttoned. Here and there a light colored wrap appeared, and some of the men pedestrians carried their coats on their arms. At Forty-second street the brougham halted at the end of a long file of carriages and motors awaiting the signal from the traffic policeman before crossing that busy thoroughfare.

The vine grown reservoir on the left showed a slight green shimmer of budding leaves. She watched the people pass rapidly by. In a moment she caught a glimpse of Dr. Manteufel's tall figure coming down the sidewalk. He towered quite over the heads of the others. As he drew nearer she



noted the self reliant carriage, the square shoulders, the easy gait.

He wore a gray suit, tan gloves, and a stiff hat. He walked easily and without moving his right arm, though the left swung slightly from the shoulder. She remembered that he had been in the army for a time and fancied him walking at the head of his regiment. He was quite opposite her when he stopped, removed his hat, and stood bareheaded as he shook hands with a rather well-gowned woman who was manifestly glad to see him. She saw a quick, bright smile play over his features for an instant and then become intent. Evidently the woman was asking him something which required a considered answer. Just at that moment a rather sharp gust of wind blew the hair at his temples into disorder and the wisps stood up on end. Mrs. Vanderlyn leaned forward in her seat, "He looks as if he had two tiny horns," she muttered. The doctor replaced his hat, bowed with some grace to the woman, brushed his lips with her gloved hand and walked on.

She drew her wrap around her thin shoulders and looked at herself in the little mirror in the brougham frame. That night she ate as heartily as she could and went to bed early.



## CHAPTER V.

HARRY VANDERLYN rolled his invalid chair farther back from the rail running around the veranda. A patch of sunlight had irritated his eyes. He reached unsteadily to a little round table and shakily lifted a pair of blue glasses which he placed before his eyes.

The end of the June day lay heavily on the pregnant earth with its verdant cloak. The sun glistened on the smooth water of the Sound of which a considerable expanse was visible through the trees. He removed the blue glasses with a gesture of impatience.

Mrs. Vanderlyn stepped out through the French window.

"Is that you, Agnes?" he asked.

"Yes, Harry; what is it?"

"Is that the Fall river boat out there, or is it one of those Maine steamers?" He pointed out over the water.

A four-masted schooner was sailing quite close to the shore, its top sails taut in the summer wind.

"You have been looking too long at the shimmering water," she answered, "that is a sailer."

"So it is; I see it now." He passed his thin hairy hand over his eyes.



Mrs. Vanderlyn stood resting one hand on the back of the rolling chair. Three months had worked a miracle. Her figure had filled out and as though touched by a magic hand the face had taken on bloom. Her light brown hair was artfully arranged and the eyebrows and eyelashes, aided by cosmetic art, made her pale blue eyes deeper in hue. She wore a light blue gown cut slightly low at the neck and fashioned close to the hips. The sleeves were short and trimmed with a fluffy lace which hung loosely over the white forearm. A gold band encircled the wrist and the slender fingers were quite devoid of ornamentation.

She raised her hand to her face and pushed back a wisp of hair, revealing a round, if somewhat slender, arm.

Vanderlyn had not walked for months. The affliction which had become manifest in the Spring had gone relentlessly on, progressively involving muscle after muscle until now he was a confirmed paralytic, being pushed about in a chair, though his hands and arms were still capable of certain incoordinate feeble efforts.

Early in May the couple had come to Larchmont to the old Vanderlyn home, with its big hall, great verandas, roomy old library and darkly furnished dining-room. Here the couple lived. Vanderlyn accepted the sacrifice on the part of his wife to his



affliction involved in a life of isolation, spending each day in his chair, driving over the smooth roads of Westchester county in a motor, and spending the nights, propped up in bed, with an attendant to read him to sleep or administer the inevitable opiate which lulled his pain in the end.

The valve motion of a motor clicked near by and in another instant a big red car slipped down the gravel drive toward the gate.

"What time is it?" Vanderlyn asked.

"Six o'clock," Mrs. Vanderlyn answered. "Connell is going to the station to meet Dr. Manteufel. He is coming to see you. I have told Yama to have dinner at seven."

"He comes quite often of late. I suppose he does the best he can, yet I do not improve much."

"You must be patient, Harry. Give yourself time. It will all come out right."

Vanderlyn did not answer at once. They both stared out over the water. A faint breeze stirred the leaves in the overhanging trees. A robin hopped over the lawn. The spray from the fountain in front of the house broke the rays of the slanting sun into the colors of the prism.

"I would give the rest of my life for thirty days of Manteufel's physique," Vanderlyn said, suddenly. He raised himself on the arms of his chair but fell back again impotently into the cushions.



The butler's queer Mongolian intonation came from the hall. "Dinner for three, did madam say?" he asked.

"No, two," Vanderlyn said, with a note of bitterness in his voice. "I am not going to display my inability to handle the table silver tonight."

Mrs. Vanderlyn seated herself in a low wicker chair. Vanderlyn continued to look vacantly into space. At times he passed his hands over his eyes with an incoordinate, inaccurate gesture common to his affliction, then shook his head and relapsed into inactivity.

Presently the motor drew up at the steps leading to the house.

Manteufel dismounted. "I want to get the 10.23 back," he said to the chauffeur. The man nodded his head, threw the gear lever back to second speed and buzzed toward the barn.

Ernst Ferdinand Manteufel carried his forty years of life with the ease with which he carried everything else. He mounted the steps to the veranda with his hat in his hand. The June sun made a shimmer on the dome of his well-posed head, filtered through the grey patch over the temple, and enhanced the somewhat weather beaten appearance of the neck near the jaw.

"It has been a very hot day in town," he said as he sat down beside his patient. "How are you to-



day, Mr. Vanderlyn?" he asked, turning away from his hostess whom he had greeted with a bow.

"Not much better, Doctor. I fancy you scientific fellows have a lot to learn."

"Yes, that's true. However, we do the best we can. We are, of course, dealing with that mystery called life. We have not the impudence of the clergy to believe that we have solved it. Indeed, the farther we delve the less arrogant we become in this regard."

He went over his patient's condition rapidly, gave some directions and turned to his hostess. He acted like a man who allotted a certain time and energy to a problem, and then dismissed it to take up something else.

She had watched him closely as he went through his work—the slender, strong hands with their automatic accuracy, the intent face, yet impassive as regards impressions registered, the slight lateral inclination of the head as though listening for a distant sound.

"Larchmont is doing you good, Mrs. Vanderlyn," he said with a sudden change of intonation which startled her. She looked down at her lap as his gaze remained steadily on her face. A faint flush spread over her cheeks and neck.

Yama brought three slender glasses of sherry on a small silver tray with a lace doily. He held the



tray toward Manteufel. "Serve madam first," Manteufel said, with enough sharpness in his voice to disturb for a moment the Mongolian temperament into spilling a little of the sherry on the tray.

Vanderlyn continued to stare toward the water. "Take your sherry, Harry," Mrs. Vanderlyn said.

Vanderlyn reached to the side opposite from where Yama stood. He did not turn his head. "Never mind," he said, "I do not feel particularly fit. I guess I'll retire. You will excuse me, Doctor," he added, still keeping his eyes towards the water where the evening breeze was making small islands of ripples on the smooth tide.

"Certainly," Manteufel answered. He rose as the butler wheeled the chair into the house and watched the invalid disappear into the shadow of the great hall with its fireplace and carved wooden ceiling.

"Harry gets peevish at times, Doctor," Mrs. Vanderlyn said as Manteufel sat down. "It is a great misfortune, yet I fancy he would be better off if he did not let the thing overwhelm him so much."

Manteufel did not answer. He drew a flat metal cigarette case from his hip pocket, extracted a cigarette and looked toward the little table. Mrs. Vanderlyn rose quickly, struck a match and held it while he ignited the tiny roll. As he leaned back she blew her breath softly at the flame as



though reluctant to see it die. Indeed, she tarried a moment too long and the flame scorched the end of her finger, yet she blew the match out without dropping it and placed it carefully on the ash-tray at her side.

"We have twenty minutes before dinner," she said. "The tide is up and those ugly marshes are quite submerged. Shall we walk down to the water edge?"

"I will be very glad to."

They walked down over the lawn, under some stately oaks and on to the shadow of a mighty willow which grew hard by the water's edge, its drooping branches barely above the tide.

"Here, sit on this bench," she said, indicating an ornamental settee which leaned against the trunk of the willow. He seated himself facing the water and Mrs. Vanderlyn sat down on a rock which overhung the bank, in disregard of her gown, and crossed her legs, revealing the edge of lacy lingerie, which made a pleasing contrast to transparent stockings and dainty patent leather pumps.

Manteufel watched her with a complacency born of metropolitan life, and let the smoke from his cigarette float lazily upward and disappear into the willow leaves.

"Your life is isolated here, Mrs. Vanderlyn," he began after a time.



She nodded her head.

"I have often thought of how brave you have been," he went on. "The man's affliction is terrible—terrible even to us who are accustomed to formulate our impressions from different standards than do the laity."

"I am not always complacent," she answered quickly. "At times a violent rebellion rises within me. At those times I would do almost anything to revenge myself on Fate." She rose and walked to Manteufel's side, placing her hand on the back of the settee near his shoulder.

He looked up at her with an added interest in his gray calm eyes. Her bosom heaved and an intent look crept into her eyes, now quite deeply colored by the surging blood in her face.

He took her slender wrist in his strong steady grasp. They looked into each other's eyes for an instant—hers dilated, inquiring; his steady, calm, yet fixed by the wondering thought rushing through his mind.

"Dinner is served," came Yama's soft voice from the lawn.

Madame served champagne with the clams. Manteufel finished the first glass at a draught, held it to the light and watched the few remaining bubbles climb up the stem. Yama refilled his glass. Madam sipped a little of the sparkling fluid and set her glass down.



"That was a tribute to the gods," Manteufel laughed. "Come, you can be a pagan for a moment. Empty your glass."

"I wish I were a pagan for just one night," she answered. "I would live such a night as would surge into my memory to its end," she added as she set down the empty glass. Yama refilled the glass. "Tell me about yourself," she went on, "about your work, about that handsome boy of yours. He has your eyes. I remember how beautiful they were that day I first saw him."

"They are the same still," he answered. "His mother had dark eyes."

"You were born in Germany, Doctor, were you not?"

"Yes, I was born in Berlin. Did the usual thing. Went to Heidelberg, took my academic degree. My father was in the army, in the artillery. I served in his branch of the service during my one year's volunteer service. The general wanted me to stay in the army but I fell in with Langenbeck and studied medicine. This was somewhat of a blow to my military progenitor. However, I carried my point. In the end I met the daughter of the American ambassador and we were married. I came to New York with her and took up the practise of my chosen vocation there."

"Yes, I remember your wife, though I never met



her. The diplomatic set is quite isolated in this country."

"I noticed that very early," Manteufel resumed. "My wife died when Fritz was two years old. Since then I have worked most of the time. General Manteufel is still alive, lectures at the military school and spends his leisure moments regretting Bismarck and my stubbornness in not coming back home. However, I am going to take Fritz over there and put him to school in Berlin. I can imagine him walking 'Unter den Linden' with his gray-haired grandfather and see the look of wonderment in his eyes when men salute the Iron Cross which the General wears."

A thoughtful look stole into Manteufel's face. He had the trick of voice which made women listen and held the attention of men. He paused now to let Yama serve the cold consomme.

"When are you going to Berlin?" she asked him.

"We sail tomorrow. Wilson will take care of what cases I have. I have not many; as you know, I do not do a general practise. You will find Wilson a conscientious man."

"And when do you come back?" she asked a trifle huskily.

"I don't know exactly. The general will be loathe to let me go. It is not intended as a display when I say that the making of my living, as you Americans call it, is not necessary to me."



"But you have worked very hard. You must have to achieve your position."

"Part of this is the outcome of a desire to win and partly because I married the daughter of the American ambassador." He laughed as he said it, throwing back his head and showing the tense corded muscles at his throat. "Prosit," he said, holding up his glass. "A bumper to the Kaiser," he touched her glass and looked into her eyes, which were strangely brilliant in the meager light somewhat artfully arranged on the table.

Her hand shook as she touched his glass with hers. "I envy you your freedom," she said softly. "I envy you your boy. I hate the thought of a childless life." She placed her hands on the table and elevated her shoulders. The gown at her neck bulged forward revealing the beginning of the fold between her breasts.

"It was better for that child to die," Manteufel said calmly. "Her life would have been nothing—only a burden to herself and those around her."

"I realize that, Doctor," she answered slowly. "Let us not speak of it."

The wine was climbing to her head, her eyes shone, the cheeks flushed, her lips became a deep crimson. A reckless mood assailed her. "I propose a bumper," she said quickly. "A bumper to posterity, to your boy, to the hope that woman carries in her heart."



They became quite animated. She seemed suddenly possessed of faculties she had never known before. She talked well, made him talk of himself and of his ambitions. She prolonged the courses by serving the dishes herself. Between times she filled his glass herself. He emptied it as often as she filled it.

Often she followed his example. It was a new experience, this giving herself up to the lure of forgetfulness.

"We will serve coffee in the billiard-room," she said at last. She led him through the library and on to a large low room built at one end of the house. The room was quite dark except for a tiny electric bulb which illuminated a small table in one corner. The room was furnished with a billiard-table, some high chairs and a green rug. The windows were screened and opened out on the lawn toward the water. In the corner where the light stood was a roomy divan half covered with pillows. Mrs. Vanderlyn half reclined on the divan. Manteufel took a chair opposite her near the table. Yama brought the coffee.

"I will serve it myself, Yama," she said. "I will ring when I want you. By the way, I think you had better go to the village with those letters on the hall stand. If I want anything, Kate can answer the bell."



"I'll serve the coffee," Manteufel said. "How many pieces of sugar?"

"One, please. I usually take two, but I need less tonight."

"I am glad to know that," Manteufel answered simply. The dim light of the electric bulb fell on her arm as she reached for the cup. Her hand grazed his wrist.

"See the moon coming up from the hills of Long Island," he said. "It will be a glorious night." He half rose from his chair as he spoke. Her face was just below his now. He caught the perfume from a rose bush which grew outside the window. She passed her arm around his full strong neck and drew his lips to hers. "Let me be the primitive Eve for just this once," she whispered, her lips yet close to his.

\* \* \* \* \*

An hour later Ernst Ferdinand Manteufel lighted a fresh cigarette as the motor carried him smoothly toward the railroad station.

Agnes stole up to her room, softly opened the door and lighted the electric bulb over her toilet table. The reflection in her glass made her start. "Agnes," she muttered, "you are a fallen woman." "Is that you, Agnes?" came Vanderlyn's petulant voice from the adjoining chamber.

"Yes." She pushed her hair into place and went in.



"Turn up the light," he asked. "My head aches me." She turned the switch at the door. "You have not made the contact. Turn the switch another half turn," Vanderlyn said impatiently.

"Why, the light is on, Harry," she said with a note of alarm in her voice. She stepped closer to his bed.

"All is dark to me. Oh!" he cried out, with unmeasurable terror in his voice, "it has come at last. I am blind, blind, blind!" He tore at the bed clothes, emitting shrill cries of terror like a child which has become frightened in its sleep.

Mrs. Vanderlyn stood aghast. "Blind, blind," she repeated after him. "God in Heaven, blind!"

"I'm falling, Agnes," he said suddenly dropping his voice to a whisper. "Hold me. I am falling."

The servants came to the door.

"Get a doctor, quick," she bade them. She had lifted him by the shoulders, her light blue dress, the white neck, the darkened eyelashes making a singular contrast to the gaunt figure with its bald head, hairy hands and blind, still eyes which seemed to stare stupidly into the light. After a time the man became still. He lay on the pillow with his eyelids closed as though waiting for something. The doctor came in. Soon came another, but they shook their heads and went out. Agnes Vanderlyn crouched in a large cane chair, with



creton covered cushions and stared silently at her husband's expressionless face.

The clock on the mantel ticked on. The servants went to bed. Vanderlyn's attendant took charge of him, administering at frequent intervals the opiate the doctors had left.

Agnes remained crouched in the chair. At day-break fatigue gained the mastery and she fell asleep.

"Where is madam?" Vanderlyn asked, as the day crept into the room. He had been lying perfectly motionless for some time, his hands folded across his chest, his eyelids closed.

"She is asleep in the big chair at the window," the attendant answered.

"Go down to the library. In the drawer of the writing desk, the middle one, you will find a leather covered book. Bring it to me."

The man left the room. Vanderlyn slowly raised himself to a sitting posture. He felt along the edge of the table at his bed-side, lifted the table cover and softly pulled out the drawer. His incoordinate hand groped in the drawer for a moment and remained still. When he drew it forth he held a slender vial with a red label on it. With difficulty he withdrew the cork with his teeth, placed the vial to his lips and let the tiny white tablets roll into his mouth and with some effort swallowed them.



Then he lay down on the pillow and folded again his thin scrawny hands across the bony chest. The attendant did not disturb him when he came back. After a time his breathing became heavy and heavier. The attendant bent over his bed. A bluish hue spread over the haggard features. He lifted the eyelids. The pupils were contracted to pin points. He opened the rigid hands. In the right hand was the vial. Then he understood. Not until the labored breathing ceased did he awaken the woman in the low cut blue gown, and led her to the bedside where the pallid face pointed inanimately toward the ceiling.



## CHAPTER VI.

GRAY-TONED February merged into milder March. The wind from the Mediterranean already had a touch of the coming Spring. Two grave men sat in the bay window of the sitting-room of the little villa at Fos. One, a slender little man with a clean shaven face and spectacles; the other, large, somewhat portly with gray hair and closely cropped gray beard.

"You think the outcome will be unfavorable, Master Tuffier?" the former said with an intonation one hears from a tired woman.

"I hope so," the elder man answered. "The woman's condition is pitiable. It would be what the Germans call 'eine erloesung' if she died. I never saw greater emaciation, even in lung tuberculosis. Beyond this, when insanity comes immediately after child birth it not infrequently ends in recovery. When it develops during pregnancy recovery rarely occurs. You tell me this woman has been varyingly maniacal and melancholy since she came here. That is six months ago, is it not?"

"Yes, sir."

Tuffier rose and walked to the window. The gulf of Fos lay sparkling in the sunlight. Beyond, the blue Mediterranean met the sky. "I



envy you your peace and quiet here, Doctor Segond. Have you had a busy winter?"

"Yes, I have been much occupied. This case has given me much concern. It seems strange that the sudden death of her husband should have had such a protracted effect. Of course, these posthumous births are unpleasant affairs, yet the conditions in this instance are disproportionate. I have had her fed with a tube for the last three weeks. She refused all nourishment. Sister Marie Gonzague has been most devoted. The woman constantly refers to the punishment of Eve. It has been ghastly. At times the delirium has been violently maniacal. We have had to tie her down. Then she would tear herself almost to pieces, constantly reverting to the one central delusion. Yet the girl baby seems healthy enough. For a day or two after the child came I hoped this would have a beneficial effect on the mother but such, you see, has not been the result. It was good of you to run down from your beloved Paris, but you always were good to your old students."

"It is a bit painful to hear you say 'old students,' " Tuffier answered with a smile. "It makes me feel as old as history."

"You need not feel badly for that, Master; you have made a history. Many of the things which I heard in your clinic ring in my ears daily. I have



carried your teaching with me into my peasants' home and often achieved much with them."

"This woman is an American, is she not?" Tuffier asked.

"Yes, sir. She came here six months ago, alone except for a maid. She seemed to have plenty of money—hired this villa, which you see overlooks the bay, and she has been there since. She was manifestly ill when she came. The maid sent for me after they had been here for a week. I have come here daily since."

The sister Maria Gonzague came to the door. "She is asking for the Abbe Herrara, Doctor Segond," she said in the quiet voice of her class. "She has seen the parish priest. Do you know Abbe Herrara?"

"Yes, he is a Jesuit. He has been here for his health for several months. He does mission preaching. I will send him a note. Let him see her when he comes."

"It is getting near time for me to start," Tuffier said, looking at his watch.

"You are going back today, are you? I'm sorry, I had hoped to show you something of our country, Doctor," Segond said a bit wistfully.

The two men walked toward the door. "You may continue with the injections at the same intervals, Sister," Segond ordered the nurse. "I will step in this evening."



"It is strange how she holds out," the nurse remarked, as she held the door open for the men to pass out.

Segond halted on the doorstep and placed his hand on the Sister's arm. "When you have been longer at your chosen vocation, you will think nothing strange." He held the door of the little coupe open for Tuffier to enter. "Thank you, Sister, for your assistance," he added as he stepped into the vehicle.

He closed his eyes as they drove off. He was a Parisian by birth and lived there until a menacing pulmonary infection drove him to the shore of the Mediterranean. He had been ambitious, too. This echo from the scene of his first endeavors, this composed man at his side, aroused painful memories, yet he smiled in another moment and let his hand rest for a moment affectionately on the elder man's knee.

"Your own health has much improved, Segond," the Parisian said.

"Yes, thank you. Here we are at the station. Your train is ready. Thank you again, and when you are tired enough come back and we will sail over the water and let the sun shine on our heads."

He watched the tall heavy figure climb into the train and turned back to his little coupe.

The nurse entered the sick-room. Her charge lay quite still now, as though at last nature had



gone its full limit. She lay on her back, looking intently at the infant in its tiny crib beside her own bed. Segond had hoped to rouse the woman into making an effort to live by keeping the infant near her at intervals.

The nurse approached the bed and wiped the moisture from the patient's forehead. Suddenly the patient began to speak. At first the words were unintelligible; after a time they became clear.

"Take her to another country," she said, now quite plainly, "where no one will know, where no one can see them. See, see, the tiny horns."

"You must not have these strange fancies, dear," the nurse said gently. She lifted the damp cold head with its deeply sunken eyes and tensely drawn features.

"Look! Do you not see them? See, they are there." She pointed shakily at the slumbering infant.

The nurse followed the finger. Surely the sparse thin hair stood up grotesquely over either temple. They did look like miniature horns. She went to the crib and brushed the hair gently with her fingers. It was rebellious, however, and sprang back into the original outline. She moistened it with water, causing it to lie flat with a few refractory wisps still curled from the scalp.

The mother closed her eyes. "Thank you. They are gone," she mumbled faintly and fell asleep.



The nurse sat quietly at the bedside. The hours slipped by. At times the patient awakened and stared anxiously at the door, then sank back mumbling through dry parched lips.

Someone tapped at the door. The patient's face became alert.

"Father Herrara is here," the nurse said, turning from the door.

"Thank God. I wish to be alone with him."

The nurse took the child up and slipped into the adjacent room.

The priest entered timidly, his dark, handsome face with its bluish chin composed and still.

"Come near, Father," she began. "Sit down where I can see you as I speak."

The priest took a low chair beside the bed where the light from the bulb beside the bed shone on his face.

"You wish to see me on some important matter, madam?" he asked in a singularly soft resonant voice. "You have your own confessor, have you not?"

"Hear my tale, Father," she said. "It calls for more than is involved in confession. Be patient with a dying woman who has sinned, yet wants the outcome of sin to never know the anguish which killed her mother."

She was perfectly rational as she spoke, as though the mind was made clear that she might



help condone her sin. She told him all without faltering, from the rebellion at her fate to the accomplishment of her end.

The priest listened with unmoved countenance.

"Does the man know?" he asked, as she paused.

"He has been in Germany with his boy. He will never know," she answered. She lay now for some time with her eyes closed, breathing quickly.

"Name her Leah," she resumed after a time, with some effort. "Leah, the Forsaken," she added, after another pause.

"God will not forsake her," the priest said steadily, "nor will His servant."

The infant in the next room whined feebly. The mother's face became alert. She raised herself up on her elbow. The dry lips drew back slightly from the encrusted teeth. The next moment she sank back on the pillow, tossing her head restlessly from side to side and picking feebly at the bed linen with her thin transparent fingers. The sun went down, rose again shimmering in the East, climbed to the dome and dipped towards the West as Agnes Costello Vanderlyn passed into the unknown with staring eyes fixed on space.

Doctor Segond trod wearily up the carpeted stairs and entered the room facing the West. The nurse had the infant on her lap. The child held its little fist close to its mouth. A long slender cloud had obscured the sun for a moment. The



child stared vacantly toward the window. Just then the cloud drove on and the bright sunlight shone full on the child's still eyeballs. The lids did not move.

"Blind, by God," Segond muttered.



## CHAPTER VII.

FRIEDERICH MANTEUFEL wrapped himself in a silk dressing gown, gave his thick light brown hair a parting rub with a towel, threw the towel on the floor, did an acrobatic stunt getting into his bath slippers and entered his living-room.

The odor of flowers filled the room. "After all," he mused, "it is pleasant to have one's birthday remembered." He turned over a card attached to a magnificent bunch of American beauty roses. "My best wishes for your twenty-fifth birthday and sincere hope for a generous outcome to the next. Pierre."

"Good old Pierre," he said aloud and turned to a little package lying on the library table in the center of the room. He opened the wrapper. A miniature in bronze of His Satanic Majesty rolled out of the last fold of tissue paper. It was well executed, showing the Fallen God poised on a rock with his great wings spread out, looking down into space. He opened the envelope fastened to the pedestal.

"My dear Dev," it read, "this is as near as I can get to immortalizing you. With apologies to Dore, I ask you to see the resemblance to yourself in at least the face. It is to be regretted that my timid-



ity will not permit me to allude to the resemblance as regards the rest of the little figure. I shall carry you in my memory like this, however—defiant, courageous, yet in my heart the woman's hope that your gentler years will not be the result of too great a fall. ALICE BARRETT."

Fritz let the note drop to the table.

"I wonder," he said, "I wonder." Louis, his valet, slave, masseur, comforter, half father, came in. "Will Monsieur have breakfast?" he asked.

"Yes, but I will have an absinthe first. Make it strong. I had a hard night, Louis."

"Yes, Monsieur."

Fritz threw himself on the divan near the window, and let his eyes pass over the room—a large comfortable affair, with dark green paper, comfortable chairs, a writing-table, a mixture of Detaile and Richards, together with photographs of startling looking women which decorated the walls. A few bronzes tucked away in obscure corners; one a marble bust of Marguerita in the corner near the window. The latter was somewhat marred by a woman's silk garter with a gold buckle fastened around the neck. Brass desk set on the writing-table. A dark green rug covered the floor. There were many smoking articles in many places. On the mantel was a mighty eagle in brass with the dial of a clock held in its bill, flanked with a



bronze bust of Von Moltke on one side and Bismarck on the other.

This day the room was filled with flowers, for Fritz Manteufel reached today his twenty-fifth birthday.

"How like Alice to put a little gentleness into her sarcasm," he muttered. She had given him his title three years ago, one hilarious night after dinner in his own rooms. "Manteufel is the German for Mandevil, is it not?" she had asked him. "Well, you are not quite enough for the real name, suppose we cut it off at both ends and call you Dev. Pretty, isn't it?" And she flashed a look at him, half coquettish, half malicious.

All his set had taken the name up from then on, and he was known in every cafe, and indeed, wherever he was accustomed to go, as "Dev."

He certainly proved himself worthy of the name. From the lad in the Russian blouse who timidly retreated from his father's office door eighteen years ago he had developed into a great, tall handsome fellow with enormous shoulders, well set head and mighty arms, just as one would expect of the son of Ernst Manteufel.

Too, one would expect from his training that he would develop the characteristics which justified the appellation given him by Alice Barrett. From his second year of life he had never had the



restraining influence of woman's guidance. At seven, placed in the care of his grandfather, General Manteufel, in Berlin, accustomed to go to school, for part of the day, take a promenade with the General in the afternoon or drive along the Berlin Park drives seated beside the old military officer, who sat bolt upright in the victoria, his cap down over his eyes, the sabre between his legs, the tightly buttoned military coat with its red facings looking as though filled with plaster of Paris, and who never moved except to raise his hand half way to his forehead in return to some salute accorded him as he went.

Dinner at seven in the old house on Friederich Strasse, in a sombre dining-room furnished in black walnut with the bust of Kaiser Wilhelm on the mantel, a portentous cuckoo clock, a picture of a Lieutenant of Uhlans disemboweling a French curassier on one wall and a portrait in oil of the General's deceased wife on the other. Some younger officer usually appeared at precisely fifteen minutes before seven each evening, clicking his heels together at the door of the General's salon. He would touch his helmet, unhook his sabre and hand it together with the helmet to the servant in fatigue uniform, without moving an unnecessary muscle and then step rigidly into the room, without a word until welcomed by the host with a smile and an inquiry as to how his regiment was



acting. If the younger officer had any other interest in life beyond the army it was never apparent during these visits, and at ten o'clock he left, going through much the same ceremony as upon entering.

During these formalities Fritz was permitted to listen, and at nine o'clock walked gravely to the General's knee, saluted him and after a nod of dismissal, turned on his heel and gravely walked out of the room. At times he would run when he reached the hall, and again at times he would dive into the kitchen and have a heart-to-heart talk with the fat cook who kept certain delicacies for him at the risk of being assassinated by the "Her vom Haus," who did not approve of that sort of thing.

Every two years the lad's father came to Berlin. On each visit the same violent scene occurred, the elder man insistent that the Doctor should return to his native country, while the latter firmly resolved to have his own way.

The only change brought about by the presence of the lad's father was that now the victoria held three instead of two, yet the salutations were the same, the promenade the same, the dinners the same and the loveless life of the child the same. When Fritz was fourteen they one day found the General in full uniform sitting bolt upright in his chair, for he was to go to a reception given by the Kaiserin Augusta that day, with his hand clinched



on his sabre-hilt staring rigidly into space with dead eyes.

Ernst Ferdinand Manteufel came to Berlin, stood for a moment beside the grave of the elder man, lifted his hat from the arrogant, composed head and led his boy away, on to the sea, and over to the country of his adoption. Then came more school and ultimately Yale. Here the youth made no friends but compelled acquaintance. During the first year at college he broke the wrestling teacher's collar-bone, assaulted a police officer in New Haven after a drunken dinner at Heublein's, was arrested and fined, but sent the policeman a note the next day inviting him to his rooms. There he goaded him into a quarrel and all but beat him to death. This affair was hushed up and Fritz made his crew. He rowed number five the day of the race, and crossed the finish line with his victorious crew in record time.

His father watched the race from the judges' boat, for he was a famous surgeon now and was shown the distinction of viewing the contest from that desirable position.

After the victorious crew flashed across the finish line all but Fritz hung limply over their sweeps, for the race had been a gruelling one. As the judges' boat came up Fritz sat erect in his seat, dripping water from the palm of his hand to his head.



Number six began to wobble in his seat. "Sit up, you cur," Fritz spat out between his teeth. "If you faint I'll beat you into pulp tonight." He punched the youth in the back with his fist. The latter drew a long breath, but he did not faint.

"Do you feel all right, Fritz?" came the Doctor's voice from the launch.

"How in hell did you expect I'd feel?" Fritz answered. A trim steam yacht drew up that moment with a large party aboard. A woman in a white gown turned to her companion, a slender youth with light blue eyes and long hair.

"I would hate you if you ever talked like that to your father, Clarence," the lady said.

But Clarence had a wistful look in his face as he watched young Manteufel reach down to loosen the foot strap on his left foot. "I don't know, mother," he said after a moment. "I wish I could sit up that way after four miles of that sort of thing."

Fritz had released his foot and now stuck it, covered with blood from where the strap had cut into the flesh, into the water. "I'm going to town at once, Fritz," the doctor called.

"Go as far as you like, old man," came the answer. "This bunch will celebrate tonight. I'll see you Monday," and he waved his hand at his father like the old general used to do when he was dismissing an adjutant.



On Fritz's twenty-first birthday his father gave him a dinner, and had coffee served in the library where he introduced the young man to a dapper looking gentleman.

"This is Mr. John Osborne," he said, "of the firm of Osborne and Osborne, American representatives of the Manteufels' attorney in Berlin. Today you become technically a man. Your mother left you an estate which has been put directly in charge of Osborne and Osborne. Besides this, your grandfather left you considerable money. The estate left you by your grandfather has been in charge of Johann Mueller of Berlin. It has been realized on, however, and the entire properties are now in the hands of Osborne and Osborne. The details can be taken up later. I want you to know that you are absolutely independent of me now technically, as you have been practically. Your income will be about twenty-five thousand dollars a year. I offer you no suggestions. I fancy you will carry out the Manteufel usual indulgence of doing as you please. I have the theory that men acquire the habit of domination more often when they are on their own resources. If you go broke I will probably help you. However, you will also probably be permitted to accept a certain hardship if you act like a fool. What will you have, kuemmel or brandy? I have an engagement at nine to hear a



new star sing. I fancy you would be bored, so I shall turn you over to Mr. Osborne."

"I will have a little brandy, please," Fritz answered calmly. A week later he walked into his father's consulting room. The elder Manteufel was seated at his desk adjusting a telephone bullet probe. He looked up at his tall son with a smile.

"I have a new brand of cigarettes," he said. "Have one?" Fritz helped himself to a cigarette, lighted it at an alcohol flame burning over an ornamental retort which had the shape of a serpent's head, blew the smoke into the air, seated himself opposite his father and remarked, "I am going to Paris."

"Go ahead," was the reply from the elder man. "I will run over to see you in the Spring. We could do Berlin, etc., together."

"All right. Will you dine with me at the club?"

"Yes. What time do you dine?"

"At seven. You might slip into a dinner coat. I will get seats for a comic opera."

"Thank you. At seven, then." The elder man turned to his probe.

"Auf wiedersehen," Fritz muttered and went out.

The farewell dinner at the club given to Fritz by his father went through his mind as he lay on the divan in his Paris apartment sipping the absinthe Louis had frapped for him. He saw the



elder man, immaculate in full evening clothes, his handsome gray head and beard carefully groomed, the little decoration of the order of Bolivar in his coat, sitting at the head of the table; the brilliant gay conversation, the carefully served dinner, the final handshake. He heard his father's even voice saying, "I do not fancy these steamer farewells. Then, too, you will probably reach the boat just as the hawser is cast off, driving a runabout motor, as the outcome of a bet that you could do it in ten minutes, and found you had to bribe a traffic policeman not to arrest you for speeding. Good-bye. I'll see you in Paris."

He had not answered. For a moment he would have been glad to have one gentle word from the austere man with the calm gray eyes. But it did not come and Fritz turned to the other guests. He had no idea of doing what his father had mentioned, but he did it nevertheless, just because he fancied his father did not want him to do it. He made the steamer just as the gang-plank was being shoved ashore.

All this was four years ago. Since then he had lived in Paris, with occasional invasions of other countries. Doctor Manteufel came to Europe every year and the two men saw each other daily, mostly at dinner, however, or at the play. Fritz spent his days studying literature and art. He believed that this occupation was less apt to interfere



with his comforts. It also made it possible for him to sit up late at night playing cards, or supping with the rather Bohemian set in which he moved.

He was not, however, a hard drinker nor an inveterate gambler and, indeed, took very good care of himself—rode horseback, fenced, walked, swam and, on the whole, followed the life of the Parisian man about town. Of his acquaintances Alice Barrett, an American girl two years his junior, interested him most, yet this never went beyond the somewhat liberal indulgences common among Americans in Paris. At first she had the notion that she could tame the young giant, but failing in this, his absolute refusal to conform to restrictions, loose as they were, of the set composed of art students, caused her to gradually withdraw herself, and for two years the pair had not met except for a fleeting bow “en route.”

Soon after she had fixed the name of “Dev” on him she had seen him driving one of the best known women of the demi-monde down the Bois in his motor. The woman was talking earnestly to her escort and the latter was listening with a bored expression on his face.

She had warned him later of the dangerous game he was playing, for the woman was a notorious “wrecker of hearts and homes,” and had been answered with a laugh and a shrug of Dev’s should-



ers. Soon the affair became too strongly manifest for even the tolerant set he moved in, and Alice Barrett together with the other women slowly withdrew. This was no great hardship to Dev, however, who amused himself with his new toy and thus carried out the traditions of his heritage and did as he pleased.

The affair had irked him of late, however, and when he had finished his breakfast he was somewhat annoyed at a visit from madam's maid.

She brought a note from her mistress which she had refused to deliver into other hands than his own and stood now in the door frame waiting for a reply.

"You have neglected me shamefully," it read. "I won't stand it any longer. Fritz, I am desperate. You have come into my life and ruined it and now you want to leave me. Come to me tonight or I will kill myself. Do not stay away from me on your birthday. ELAINE BRIDAU."

"Present my compliments to madam, and tell her I will call her on the wire later in the day," Dev. said lazily. The maid withdrew.

Louis' smug face appeared in the door. "Monsieur, Colonel Claude Bernard has just telephoned he will breakfast with you at nine."

Bernard was a colonel of cavalry attached to the secretary of war's office, forty-five years of age, chiefly notorious for the quantity of absinthe he



could consume in twenty-four hours, and was usually assigned to handle makers of uniforms and ordinance. Fritz had made his acquaintance early in his Paris life, and the two indulged in their dissipations together. The affair with the Brideau woman had been a source of annoyance even to the lax morals of Bernard. He had frequently made her the text of dissertations on the necessity of glossing certain actions over; advice Fritz with his usual radicalism had refused to accept. The last few months Bernard had attempted to induce Manteufel to accept an appointment as second lieutenant of cavalry of the Foreign Legion, believing that the discipline would have a favorable result both physically and morally on his young friend. Then, too, he felt that in this way the Brideau affair would find a normal end. This concern for Manteufel's moral status was in peculiar contrast to the usual manner of this complete man of the world. However, he was genuinely fond of the young cub, and felt that unless he was taken out of his entanglement there would be one of those unfortunate outcomes which blaze in the headlines of the yellow journals even in Paris.

Promptly at nine o'clock the Colonel presented himself, in freshly pressed fatigue uniform, cigarette in the corner of his mouth, and mustache turned up. He threw his cap on the divan, unhooked his sabre and handed it to Louis, then he



shook hands with Fritz, and sat down in a big chair, crossed his rather well made legs, and began. "That affair the other night was pretty raw, old man. I think it might be better for you to restrict your alcoholic indulgences to the privacy of madam's apartments. But I am not going to preach. I have an appointment with Guillaume Recamier, our honored chief, and perhaps after the interview you will think of accepting the suggestion I have repeatedly offered you."

"I have a note now from Madam," Dev said irritably. "I must confess the thing is getting on my nerves. If she were poor the proposition would be easy. As it is, her diamonds would keep her for the rest of her life. I am sure I don't know what the devil to do. All right, I will go and see your chief. It is now nine o'clock. We can have breakfast leisurely, smoke a cigarette, and make our official call."

"Good boy!" Bernard cried with some exultation in his voice. "If the matter is handled properly you will get an appointment as aide de camp on the staff of the commander of the department of Algiers, with whom I served myself for a year. I will see that you are comfortably quartered, and properly taken care of. The work is easy, and you would probably not be detailed into the desert unless some unusual condition arises. I warn you, however, that Jean Baptiste Moreau has an exceed-



ingly attractive environment. I would suggest that you, if you go, lay out a certain routine as regards method of living for a few weeks. It would be necessary for you at least to understand in a superficial sort of way the handling of men. Beyond this your duties will consist more largely of looking well on horseback, and trying to keep sober after dinner after evening parade. Come, I will give you a walk on the Bois before you appear at headquarters. You look a little rocky."

Promptly at ten, a well groomed orderly showed the two men into the office of General Recamier, a short slender man, of fifty-five, in well fitting uniform, polished boots, carefully brushed hair, and a faint odor of perfume about him, the latter conveying the idea that he would look just as well in skirts. He stepped forward quickly, however, and greeted Bernard and Manteufel with rather a warm shake of the hand. "I am a busy man," he said, "am sorry I have not as much time to devote to you as I would like. However, the difficulty in your instance, Monsieur Friederich Manteufel, is that you are not a citizen of this country. It will be necessary for you, before you get a commission, to take the oath of allegiance. This, however, can be done in my office. The ceremony of swearing the colors is a simple one. You can take that together with a number of recruits which we swear in weekly at the arsenal."



"You seem to take it for granted that I am ready to serve in your department, sir," Fritz answered. He was standing now at the minister's desk playing with a bronze paper weight cast in the form of a nymph. "My name has usually been enlisted against your country."

"Time is a great diluent to all human emotion, Monsieur Manteufel. I fancy you would not have come to me had you not made up your mind in the matter. Again, I will do you the honor of stating that we prefer to have the name with us. It is the height of mental development to make a friend of an hereditary enemy. If I understand it, you are an American born."

"I am an American born," Fritz answered with a barely perceptible straightening of his shoulders.

"Come, Dev, be a good sport. The thing will do you good," Bernard interposed. "I'll go with you to Algiers and stay a week. I can put you on to the best cafes, etc. Then I'll come back and you have my assurance that our friend Brideau will not make any trouble for you when I have talked to her."

"Done," Fritz said with a sudden flash in his gray blue eyes. "I am ready to take the oath of allegiance, sir," he added, turning to Recamier, who had lighted a perfumed cigarette. The ceremony was over in a moment.

"I am glad to welcome you into the army, sir,"



Bernard said. His voice had become suddenly grave. He reached out his hand to Manteufel, without moving his booted feet and bowed slightly at the waist.

A week later the Marseilles - Algiers steamer "Medusa" deposited the pair at the wharf at Algiers.

An hour later Monsieur Lieutenant Friederich Manteufel of the Sixty-ninth Cavalry of the Foreign Legion presented himself at the residence of Jean Baptiste Moreau, was assigned to quarters and at sundown sat behind the reviewing officer as the division filed by.

Elaine Brideau did not kill herself.



## CHAPTER VIII.

THE department commander looked a bit impatiently at the trim orderly. The commander had everything about him in trim. The persistent attention given to every detail of his surroundings was responsible for the absence of lines in his handsome, clean-cut face. It was also responsible for the palms which decorated the veranda, for the green and yellow striped awning which kept the sun from obtruding on the little space with its cane sofa, cane chairs, and light wood writing desk. Just at present the sofa was occupied by a woman of twenty with dark slumberous eyes, opulent figure, fair skin, and a loose kimona heavily embroidered with Japanese figures. At her elbow stood a wicker table holding two tall glasses, filled with cracked ice. Absinthe was slowly dripping from superimposed glass bowls which had tiny holes in the middle allowing greenish drops of absinthe to drip on the ice below and slowly cloud the water at the bottom with an opalescent hue. The department commander sat at his desk, his legs crossed, booted and spurred, in immaculate white pique, a crimson sash, a gold star at the collar of his blouse, the Legion of Honor decoration on his breast. One equally immaculately white gauntlet lay on the



desk, the other covered the left hand, a white cap with a shining leather visor hung suspended from the woman's foot. She was trying to balance it as she had seen juggler's do in the theatre.

"Well, Orderly, what do you want?" the commander asked.

"Monsieur le Lieutenant Manteufel to see you, sir."

"Show him in." The General rolled a dainty Egyptian cigarette between his fingers, placed the end with his monogram between his lips, brushed the mustache which was liberally sprinkled with gray aside with a slender white well groomed hand, and pushed some papers toward the edge of the desk.

The woman on the sofa patted her inky black hair into place, pushed the loose sleeves of the kimona up over her shoulders and looked for a moment at the white smooth arm.

Hortense Marie Laborde was the daughter of an Arab woman by a French soldier. She also was the mistress of the department commander. Chiefly because she was startlingly beautiful, could do Oriental dances, had an antipathy to attire, drank like a trooper and had the Oriental's fear of her lord and master and consequently behaved with decorum when ordered, only indulging in loose habits when not under observation. On the whole she was happy enough. Born in a brothel, raised



in the streets, picked up by the church, educated by nuns, she ultimately kicked over the traces and became the mistress of the commander of the Department of Algiers.

Jean Baptiste Moreau, the department commander, was good to look at, rich, a pet of the home government, had a brilliant staff around him, entertained lavishly, was a widower, fifty-two years of age, and didn't care what Mademoiselle did as long as she amused him, bathed frequently and did not demonstrate her affairs too manifestly. In addition to this he was a good soldier, a strict disciplinarian in all matters military, and had discretion enough to close his eyes to annoying complications of a social nature.

Consequently his mistress obeyed him, his soldiers adored him and his staff loved him.

"What has poor Fritz done now?" she asked with a smile exposing her teeth.

"You ask embarrassing questions, my dear. However, the matter is a personal one and will interest you as all matters pertaining to that good looking cub always do. Ah! come out, Fritz," he called into the room adjoining the veranda, as he heard the visitor's sabre strike against a piece of furniture.

Fritz stepped out through the open window. The six months of military life had done him no harm. On the contrary, the slight carelessness of



carriage of the boulevardier had vanished and the added stiffness of deportment sat well on his powerful well balanced body. He clicked his heels together, raised the sabre from the floor with his left hand and brought the right sharply to his visor.

Moreau waved his hand toward Hortense. Fritz stepped forward, bowed profoundly, removed his cap and kissed the hand the woman lazily held toward him.

"My compliments, Madam. You look charming this morning. General, I congratulate you."

Hortense let her eyelashes sweep her cheek and rubbed her bare arm against Fritz's sabre scabbard.

"Sit down, Fritz. Have a little absinthe. The morning is hot," the General said in his low voice. Yet the intonation was a bit more incisive than usual.

Fritz sat down in a big chair resting the sabre scabbard between his legs. "I have just had an absinthe, thank you."

"Try one of these cigarettes," Hortense put in.

Fritz lighted one, blew the smoke in a thick cloud into the warm clear air, watched it obscure for an instant the little patch of the Mediterranean visible a moment before through the foliage, and then waited for the Commander to begin.

"Ben Batouch is dead," the Commander said quietly.

"He will reincarnate as a swine," Fritz an-



swered, without taking the cigarette from his mouth.

"What is the woman like, Fritz?" Hortense asked.

"That will do, Mademoiselle," the General admonished somewhat sharply. "You may remain if you keep quiet, otherwise I must trouble you to withdraw. I know you do not fancy exertion at this time of day."

"The affair is bad, Fritz," Moreau said, turning again to the young officer. "It's true the man should not have denounced you in a public cafe as the lover of his favorite wife. But that is no reason why you should have split his skull open with a champagne bottle. The man was respected in his set and has many friends. You know I place little restrictions on my aids. In the six months of your service on my staff you have performed your duties with care and accuracy. Indeed, I have been glad to have you with me. You are the youngest of my men. You have done much good with your fencing and academy works, and I do not wish to have you in trouble. Still the natives must be at least apparently sustained when they are in the right."

Fritz did not answer, he went on smoking and looked vacantly into space.

"Fouchard, you know, is at Ath Sefra with a squadron of cavalry, getting ready to relieve the



garrison at El Mungar. El Mungar is one hundred and fifty miles from Ath Sefra. From Ath Sefra the march is in the desert. You will start tonight by rail for Perragaux. The train is a good one. From Perragaux you will take a special for which I have wired. This will get you to Ath Sefra in about six hours. On the whole, the entire journey should not last more than eighteen hours. You will present my compliments to Colonel Fouchard and serve as his personal aid. Cattle will be furnished you by his quartermaster. The public here will be satisfied. I will see that the native papers record your being sent off. The thing will quiet down. You can return with the men relieved at El Mungar. The Moroccans have been a bit restless. You may see some active service that will do you good." The Commander rose and Fritz rose with him. "I am going down to the barracks, Monsieur le Lieutenant. You need not escort me." He shook hands with the younger man. There was not much difference in height between the men, though the advantage, slight as it was, lay with the American. The Commander picked up his cap and placed it on his thick gray hair, which together with his beard he kept closely cropped. "God bless you, my boy, and come back tamed," he added as he shook the aide by the hand.

Fritz stood at attention as the elder man passed out. He did not answer but brought his hand to



his forehead and watched the Commander step quickly down the gravel walk and swing lightly into the saddle of a strongly-built horse which his orderly held by the bridle at the little gate leading to the grounds.

“Why do you never make love to me, Monsieur le Lieutenant?” Hortense asked as the Commander’s horse’s hoof-beats died down. “You make love to every other woman in Algiers. Am I not as attractive as they are?” She gave a coquettish little laugh. “Here, pull your chair up to me. I will make a fresh absinthe, these are too thin.”

Fritz pulled his chair closer to the recumbent figure. Hortense poured the absinthe from the glasses into a crystal bowl and refilled the drip-bowls. “You are a perfect bear,” she went on, with a glance out of the corner of her eye. One of the glasses was difficult to reach with the absinthe kiraffe, and as she leaned over she all but toppled to the floor.

Fritz steadied her quickly with his hand against her breast. She gave a little startled cry but did not attempt to regain the safe position. Fritz held her while she poured the absinthe.

“Here, take the kiraffe, Fritz. With the other hand—you can hold your cigarette with those alluring lips of yours.” She laughed gayly as he took the kiraffe. “Now help me turn over, that’s a



good boy." She put her hand over his and pressed it firmly against her round warm neck as he pushed her toward the center of the sofa.

He had half risen from his chair to help her, and was now bent over her with his face quite close to hers. She took the cigarette from his mouth with the disengaged hand, slipped the other round his neck, raised herself quickly from the sofa and kissed him full on the lips. "Perfectly delicious. Here, take your absinthe," she handed him the glass, "and here is a fresh cigarette." She took one from the fold of her kimona. "It is scented with a rare Arabian perfume."

"It has been close enough to you, my dear," he answered, "not to need any Arabian or other scent." He laughed his careless, hearty laugh, startling a gold and yellow bird from one of the palm trees in the garden. It darted quite close to the awning and disappeared into the little patch of Mediterranean.

"I wish I were as free as that," she said with a touch of pathos in her voice. "To fly off with you into the desert and hold you there for myself, myself alone."

"Hortense Laborde, you are a liar," Fritz answered. "You know very well that you much prefer to lie on that couch and sip iced absinthe and have the entire staff systematically and in rota-



tion come here and tell you how beautiful you are. So don't stimulate my notorious self-love so early in the day."

"What is that Batouch woman like, Fritz? I envy her. I'll bet she's more beautiful than I am. I hate her anyway." She gave a little pout.

"Oh! don't bother me about her. She has been trouble enough."

"I don't blame her a bit for falling in love with you, my boy. No indeed, not a bit. Come over here and sit on the lounge." She moved back to make room for him.

"Not much, you little devil. I'm not ready to have a duel on with the entire staff. Anyway, I am off for that infernal hole of an El Mungar this evening. I might have an Arab bullet make daylight through me, and then you'd have to retrain your affections. Come, I must go." He rose as he spoke and pulled his blouse down under his belt.

"Don't be such a baby. Your man can pack your things in ten minutes. You are off duty. Stay here and talk to me."

The hurried footsteps of Moreau's adjutant came up the gravel walk. Fritz called to him from the veranda.

"Monsieur le Commandeur is at the barracks, sir."



"Thank you, I am aware of that. I have a message for Madam. Is she there?"

"Yes, sir," Fritz answered. He turned to Hortense and made his adieu. "Thank fortune I'm out of this," he muttered as he passed out.

The next moment the adjutant, a slender man with a haggard tanned face, came out on the veranda. Hortense Laborde looked at him with a glance which bore a striking resemblance to the one she had given Lieutenant Manteufel.

Fritz walked rapidly to the road where his orderly was holding two horses, and swung into the saddle of his own mare. "Go to my quarters," he ordered as the orderly mounted his own horse. "Tell the congenital idiot who goes by the name of Louis to pack up my fatigue stuff. Tell him I'm going into the field. Also tell him I do not want all my toilet articles or he'll put up the entire mess. Come then to Mademoiselle Rougon's house and get my horse. You may go off duty then until 4 o'clock. At that hour bring the mare to me. I will make the evening parade." He stuck the spur into his mare and galloped rapidly down the road.

A few moments later he drew up before Camille Rougon's little villa.

"Madam is in the garden," the maid told him as he approached the house.

"Very well," he answered, patting the girl's cheek with his gloved hand. The maid let her



needle work rest in her lap and smiled up into the young officer's face.

Fritz went on into the garden. Camille Rougon was two years older than Fritz. She had eyelashes which had a tendency to melt into black streaks in very hot weather. However, she needed not this decoration, for the lashes were pretty enough naturally. Still, she thought resorting to the arts made a better contrast with her dark red hair, which grew in great abundance on a well made head. Beyond this she had glorious blue eyes, white skin, a strongly made full figure, small feet and beautiful hands marred by a faint stain of nicotine where her cigarette habitually rested. She was seated in a low cane chair placed under a thickly leaved Japanese maple tree, planted there many years before by a French merchant who had occupied the house until he made money enough robbing the natives to live near his beloved boulevards.

Camille Rougon had had a checkered career. Born in Paris, the daughter of a restaurant keeper. She had served hot dishes and cold wine to her father's clients until she was sixteen. At that time a theatrical manager had put her in the chorus of a comic opera. After that she went to the usual course, and ultimately became the mistress of a lieutenant of cavalry who was ordered to Algiers because of certain unusual occurrences



which made headquarters feel that he had better get a little tropical sunlight on his hide for a time. At the end of a year the officer had the misfortune to get drunk and fall from his horse while riding home at daybreak. The fall broke his neck and Camille was thrown on her own resources. These, however, were ample. In a short time she was the most sought after courtesan in Algiers. The occupation was a profitable one. She owned the little villa, kept three servants and a pair of horses which pulled her along the esplanade every afternoon before sundown. Soon after Fritz's arrival in Algiers she had seen him ride down the main street with Moreau. The length of limb, the square shoulder, the entire make-up pleased her fancy. It was only a matter of a scented note, a glorious moonlit starry night, a cold well served dinner, coffee under the trees, the soft warm air of the tropics, a whiff of perfume, a drop of a well trained voice, her breath against his cheek and Fritz made almost daily visits to the little villa overlooking the sea.

She had found keeping her tall soldier a bit more difficult than she had deemed possible. Not infrequently the restless spirit of the man drew on her arts to their fullest extent. The conquest attracted her. Never before had the situation been thus reversed. Once she had caught sight of him bending over a well-groomed young woman in a



box at the theatre. She had felt a jealous pang dart through her. Just then the girl placed her hand on the young officer's arm and smiled up into his handsome arrogant face. He smiled back into her eyes in a way with which the courtesan was familiar and she had felt a wild desire to strangle the "pale faced hussy," as she called her under her breath. The next day she had used every art to entrance him with her allure, and after sending him home at daybreak, analyzed the situation a bit more accurately from the standpoint of physical fatigue.

Her judgment told her that the affair was a thing of the moment to him, but he had aroused the latent woman within her, brought up the natural slave instinct of her sex and she was ready to render herself subservient to his every mood to hold him. This was a disquieting conclusion; yet, she was woman enough to see the writing on the wall, and for once the tears that rolled down her cheeks were not artistically mopped up so that they might not wash the stain from her eyelashes, and she let them flow unhampered and stain the pillow case.

She looked up now with a brightening light in her eyes as she heard his heavy footfalls on the grass and sprang into his arms as he approached.

He sat her down in her chair and squatted at her feet.



"What brings you here so early in the day, Friederich?" she asked. She was perhaps the only one to call him Friederich.

"No bad news I hope. Yes, there is something," she added quickly. "Tell me, what is it?" She ran her hand through his abundant hair. "It's that Batouch affair? You were unwise there, Friederich dear."

"I did not like being charged with an affair with a fat unwashed Arab woman," Fritz answered sullenly.

"She is quite universally regarded as beautiful. I'm glad you do not like her."

"Well, never mind that now. Moreau has ordered me to Ath Sefra, Fouchard's staff aide de camp. One hundred and fifty miles of desert, after that. I hope Fouchard has a portable rum trunk."

"You are going away?" she burst out. She rose startled. "You may get shot. I know the Moroccos have been very bad again. Oh! Friederich, what will become of me if anything happens to you?"

"Get another damned ass of a staff officer, I hope. Don't expect you to wear black and go to mass daily. However, black would look well with that flaming head of yours." He gave his hearty contagious laugh. Camille did not join him. She remained silent so long that Fritz looked up with some surprise.



She was looking past him, out toward the blue sun-dazzled Mediterranean. One hand rested on her breast, the other hung loosely by her side.

"The devil!" he broke in. "You look like a Puritan maiden waiting for the return of a fisherman. My dear, you should have been an actress—I mean a real actress. You make me wish I had not broken Batouch's skull. Come, kiss me."

She came to him and wound her arms around his neck. "You will come back, Friederich? Promise you will. I will die without you." She reached over and pressed him tenderly. "I deserve something in my life," she went on with her full warm lips against his cheek. "I will not let you go. I will see Moreau. I will beg him on my knees. He will listen to me."

"You will do nothing of the sort," Fritz cried fiercely. He pushed her violently from him. "Do you think I am one of that kind of cattle? Where out of hell did you get that impression from?"

She had staggered as he pushed her and sank now to the thick odorous grass with her face buried in the soft flesh of her arm.

"You must have rubbed against a fine set of people," Fritz went on. "Here, look at me."

She raised a pale frightened face and stared at him with wide glistening eyes. "I have seen them come back from the desert," she moaned, "haggard, hollow-eyed, awful, dry-lipped, delirious, mumbling



through encrusted teeth, begging for death. Most of them did not know how to pray. 'Tall young boys, strong dark-eyed men, blue-eyed blonde giants, even like you, Friederich, when they went.'" She shuddered and buried again her face in her arm.

"Come, get up," he said more gently. He took her to her chair. "I am going to Ath Sefra, and then on to the desert. There must be no misunderstanding about that. I will come back and I will be just as tall, and just as straight, and," he added with a smile, "just as ready to offer myself at the shrine of Camille Rougon as when I left."

"I will go with you to Ath Sefra," she said softly through the blinding tears. "I will see you go out into the never-ending sand. I want to carry your image in my heart, as you look riding away. I will watch you with your beautiful head high over all the rest, close to the colors, and you must wave your hand at me just as distance engulfs you. You will let me go, Friederich? Please, dear."

She rose as she finished speaking and held her smooth white arms toward him where he stood leaning against the Japanese maple, one hand on the sabre hilt, the other playing with a leaf which barely touched his bronzed cheek. "No," he answered steadily. "I will leave you at four o'clock, in time for the evening parade. Then I will go on alone. I do not intend to make this affair easier



than is intended. Stay here with your maids, your perfumed robes, and your cold absinthe. For once I am going without the softening note of the feminine in my life. Come, it is time for lunch."

She obeyed him without further comment. At four o'clock he sprang into the saddle at her gate and galloped rapidly to his quarters, made his final arrangements, and just as the sun went down sat at attention on his mare with his sabre pointed to the ground as the colors came down and the drums and bugle sounded "off."

Moreau's sonorous voice rang out. "Pass in review, by columns of company—first company squad right, forward, march."

Fritz brought his sabre to a "carry," prodded the rigid mare into activity and watched the brigade slowly pass by. The men at port arms, the sword bayonets of the Zouaves glistening in the twilight. He sheathed his sabre with the rest, saluted Moreau with the hand, caught the nod of dismissal from his chief, wheeled the mare about and a few moments later threw his bridle to his orderly at the railroad station, and soon was being bumped over the uneven roadbed of the Algerian coast line toward Perragaux.



## CHAPTER IX.

THE ride from Perragaux had been less stifling than the trip from Algiers to that beautiful sun-baked railroad junction. The special consisted of a locomotive and a parlor car.

"How like Moreau to dilute his acridity with some softening addition at the time you expect to get to the dregs," Fritz had thought as a well-groomed porter took his baggage. However, a supply train had the bad manners to get wedged into a switch at a siding and it took a band of sweating Arabs and profane railroad men to extricate it. Not until several hot hours had gone into history and it was near sundown was Ath Sefra reached. A rather dainty looking orderly well brushed and polished, with white gauntlets met Fritz at the shed, which was called the railroad station. He led him to a round barrelled fidgety mare of chestnut hue and a restless nose, and led the way past a long row of supply sheds to the headquarters of Colonel Fouchard.

Colonel Fouchard lived in a roomy hospital tent. The Government had intended it to be used for a hospital, but Fouchard was a fastidious gentleman and liked it and had it.

Fritz dismounted at a gravel walk edged with



whitewashed stones which led to his Chief's tent. The Colonel had issued orders that all must dismount here—he did not like dust in his quarters. A group of orderlies held a peculiar assortment of horses. They were tall, lank beasts, remarkably well groomed, a few half Arabs and several that looked like thoroughbreds.

“A fine time to start for El Mungar,” he heard one of them say, as he dismounted. “Beautiful torrid July. Well, some one will bleach his bones out there, I’ll bet.”

“Shut your gape,” another put in hastily, with a gesture toward Fritz. “There comes a staff officer. See his strappings are new.”

Fritz passed out of earshot. “Present the compliments of Lieutenant Manteufel to Colonel Fouchard,” he said to the guard at the Colonel’s tent.

“Please to step in, sir,” the guard announced in a moment. As Fritz stepped forward he heard the snap of a carbine coming to a “present.” He touched his cap and entered the tent. The Colonel was alone. He sat in a comfortable chair at a field desk covered with papers. He looked up from a map studded with tiny red pins as Fritz approached, rose quickly to his feet and held out his hand. Fouchard was a middle sized, wiry looking man of fifty who looked older. He wore a faded blue blouse with a silver eagle at the collar, khaki breeches, boots and spurs. His face was thin and



seared, partly covered with a trimmed iron gray pointed beard and a moustache twisted at the ends. He fastened a pair of dark rather boyish eyes on the visitor. "I am glad to welcome you to the field, Monsieur Manteufel. I am happy to greet you as a member of my staff. My esteemed friend Moreau has wired me regarding yourself. I hope we will get on well together."

Fritz bowed silently.

"We dine at seven, immediately after parade. You will find my troops less elegantly but perhaps more efficiently uniformed than those at Algiers."

"Any immediate orders, sir?" Fritz asked, with that stereotyped expression which conveyed the idea that any kind of an answer was acceptable.

"No, you may retire to your quarters. Here, orderly, show Lieutenant Manteufel to his quarters. I hope to see you at dinner, sir." The Colonel sat down. Fritz passed out.

"A rum old crab, I'll bet," he muttered as he followed the orderly to an exceedingly comfortable officer's tent back of the Colonel's quarters.

At dinner he met the staff. A group of men, one from each branch of the service. The artillery officer told ribald stories and told them well. Most of the men got drunk at dinner, which was well served on a long table under a tent fly. After dinner coffee was brought to the space in front of the Colonel's tent.



"We leave day after tomorrow," the Colonel announced. "Only a squadron of cavalry is going. That makes it easy. The infantry and artillery—I beg your pardon," the Colonel put in suddenly as he bowed to his artillery officer. "I should have said artillery and infantry remain. However, the fact that only the cavalry goes makes it a simpler proposition. We can do the one hundred and fifty miles in three days, or at least no more than four. The cattle are well acclimated. They will stand up under the heat. Lieutenant Manteufel, you go with me. You will act as my adjutant. I shall have no other staff officer."

Fritz bowed. "That's a relief," he muttered, looking at the somewhat motley group about him. The next two days he spent becoming familiar with his new duties. The start was delayed a day because of some misunderstanding about hospital supplies. Finally on the third day at daybreak the troops filed along the road to El Mungar in columns of four—one hundred and thirty men, one vivandiere, one hundred and fifty horses, three supply wagons and an ambulance. The dust soon engulfed them and the group of indolent troops watching the departure lost them from sight and turned to the humdrum life of a railroad terminal encampment.

For three days they kept steadily going south. The heat was worse than they had anticipated.



Fouchard conserved his stock. He was an old hand at the business. The middle of the day was given to rest. The progress was made early and late in the day. The third night found them with still sixty miles to cover. The next morning they had made a rapid dash, the heat being less intense. They covered twenty miles between sunrise and eleven o'clock. At four o'clock Fouchard ordered a fresh start. "We must be on a level with Oglat-Tuila," he said to Fritz as they faced south.

"If the map is right that makes us about forty miles north of Elm Angur," Fritz answered.

"Just about. We will make it by eleven tomorrow, if nothing happens."

They were riding on the left of the squadron, which rode in columns of four. The men were in good shape. The color-sergeant at the head of the second troop was talking gaily to the little dark-haired vivandiere. She wore a modification of the regimental uniform, and carried the obligatory brandy cask swung from the shoulder on her hip.

Fouchard and Fritz rode on a line with the colors. The column was proceeding at a walk over the undulating sand mounds. The supply wagons creaked heavily in the rear. At times a horse broke into a trot, causing the trappings to rattle. Suddenly a rifle shot rang out. The trooper to the right of the colors stiffened and lunged to the sand.



"Those damned Moroccoans!" Fouchard yelled. He swung his mount around. A volley of rifle fire tore small lanes into the files.

"Fours right," Fouchard yelled. "Dismount, don't get rattled." A white streak seemed to rise from the desert. It became larger, took on form.

"A thousand of them!" Fouchard cried. "Load. Fire. Fire at will. Here they come. Mount men, mount, they are going to charge." The troopers had fired a volley at the rapidly approaching line. They mounted in haste. The firing startled the horses, some broke away from the men and galloped away. Most of the men gained the saddles. The rest threw themselves on the sand and pumped their magazines empty. The mounted men drew their sabres. The Arabs were quite near now, riding furiously into the disordered squadron. Tall, thin men they were, with beards and intent eyes. For an instant silence fell and then they struck. A mighty grunt seemed to come from both sides.

Fritz awoke from his trance. Fouchard was galloping back and forth issuing orders which no one seemed to hear. The color-sergeant lunged forward, carrying the colors to the ground. His horse ripped a hoof through the silk fabric. Fritz spurred his mare into a gap made by a fallen trooper whose horse galloped to the rear dragging the man by the stirrup. In a moment he was in the fight.

The carbine fire lulled and began again on the



right. The men on the supply wagons and ambulance became engaged. Fritz felt a certain exultation; every time his blade came down he grunted. The men about him fought desperately. The column began to sag. Fritz had a clear space before him for a moment. He drew his pistol and fired again and again.

"Hell and damnation, they fight like demons." He shook the sweat from his eyelashes. "Damn them, to be cut down by a mob of stinking niggers." He fired his pistol into a black, rage-distorted face. The eye-socket became a blackened smudge, and the Arab fell to his horse's neck, groping blindly for a hold and fell.

"Another problem for my illustrious namesake," he yelled. His mare tossed her head. The slobber from her mouth struck him in the eye. The briny sting made him wince. For an instant he closed his eyes. A heavy jar against his leg made him open them at once. A gaunt Arab had lunged his mount against him. The mare went to her knees. The Arab's sabre passed over his head. He jabbed his own blade into the man's body, close to the crimson sash. Blood and slime oozed over the hilt on to the glove. It felt warm where the gauntlet met the wrist. The Arab clutched his blouse and dragged him to the ground. The mare reared wildly, and at the same time the bridle caught the bend of his elbow and pulled Fritz to his feet. As



the mare came down, one iron hoof crushed into the prostrate Arab's skull. Fritz dropped his pistol, slid the bridle to his hand, the mare strained away.

Fouchard's deep, strong voice rang out through the tumult. "Cut your way out, Manteufel, and retreat."

"Got a swell chance," Fritz muttered. He twisted the bridle hand into the mare's mane, found the stirrup with his left foot and swung into the saddle. The mare wheeled to the rear. He caught a glimpse of an open space between two groups of hacking, swearing grunting troopers. The wide expanse of sand lay before him. He gave a wild, exultant, daring yell, sent the spur viciously home into the lathered flank and the mare bounded into the space. He made a head mollinet at the nearest Arab, slicing a gash into the greasy neck. "I leave you my card," he yelled. He leaned close to his mare's steaming neck. On she went, on and on and on, while thundering hoofs followed.

"Run, you wind-broken bastard-get of a cur breed," he yelled. "Run as you never ran before. Run for the glory of one of your erring blooded ancestors." He drove the spur again and again into the heaving flank. The mare struggled bravely on under the lurid sun, over the baking sands. The hoof beats became fainter. He did not look back. As the mare faltered he brought his sabre down on her rump. No use, a few yards farther and she



stumbled. A little farther and she went to her knees, ploughing into the sand with her red quivering nostrils, rolled over on her side, turned her big pleading eyes toward the rider and lay still.

Fritz slipped his feet from the stirrups as she fell and landed safely over her head. He watched her draw her last breath. "Dead in a bad cause, old sport," he said aloud. The mare had stumbled taking the rise of a sand mound and fallen into a little valley beyond. He was quite alone. The sun was yet high in the bronze colored sky. He had not heard his pursuers for some time. He walked to the dead mare and found that she had fallen on the canteen side. With difficulty he raised the carcass. The canteen was uninjured, thanks to the soft sand the mare had fallen on. He took a long drink of the warmish contents, carefully screwed the cap into place and mounted the sand mound, taking care to lie down when he reached the top. Two mounted figures were coming toward him. He watched them draw nearer. Soon he made out two of his own troopers, one of whom was supporting what looked like a bundle on the pommel of his saddle. He stood erect and waved his cap. As the horsemen drew nearer, he saw that one of the men carried the vivandiere. She seemed limp and helpless. A few moments later the men rode up.

"Cut out after you, Monsieur Lieutenant," the bearer of the vivandiere said.



Fritz took the girl in his arms and placed her on the ground. Her black thick hair covered her eyes, enhancing the pallor of the cheek. The colorless lips were parted, barely the bosom moved. The blouse was thick with clotting blood. Fritz pushed the disordered hair from the eyes. They were fixed and still. Just then she gave a little gasp, the features contorted into a grimace, the lips drew back from the white teeth, composed into placidity and she breathed no more.

"You, too, tried for the glory of some progenitor, and you, too, gave up a misplaced life," Fritz said. He laughed his impudent ruthless laugh. "See," he added, bending down, "the cask, the insignia of her rank, is unharmed. Half full. I will drink to the eternal salvation of her soul."

He withdrew the spigot and took a long drink.

"Bah!" he said. "The stuff is Government brandy." Then to the men who had dismounted and stood bareheaded at a respectful distance, "Come, comrades, misery equalizes rank. Join me."

He held the tiny cask toward them. They shook their heads. "Very well," Fritz went on. "Then to business. What is the condition of your cattle? Mine, you see, is finished." He walked over to the horses. One, a tall strongly made bay, was in fair shape; the other, a lean skate, had a frightful wound in the side and stood with its legs apart and head down, slowly dripping blood to the sand.



"This one is done for," Fritz said, indicating the wounded horse. "The other will do after a rest. The thing is to get water." He turned toward the men.

"What in hell are you standing there like a pair of idiots for? Haven't you anything to say? Come you, Picard," he called to the nearest man, a tall slender youth of twenty, who was still gazing wonderingly at the dead girl on the sand. "You had gab enough in quarters. Say something."

The man touched his visor. "I have nothing to say, sir. We found her lying on the ground. She lay a hundred yards back of where you broke through. Henri Beauchamp here," he pointed to his companion, "he picked her up and I put her on my horse. Henri's horse was wounded. We rode after you. Now she is dead. God rest her soul."

"Never mind that now. That's over. The woman is dead. Here, cover her with some sand. Both of you get to work." He turned toward the injured horse. The beast was going rapidly.

"That's right," he cried irritably, "die, damn you, like everything else in this accursed country. That's it. There you go. Piff." The horse sank to his knees as he spoke, lunged forward and lay on its side gasping feebly for breath.

"Here, Picard. Have you a cartridge in your belt? This magazine is empty." He had taken the



carbine from the uninjured horse and opened the breech.

The trooper handed him a cartridge which he slipped into the chamber, locked the piece, raised it to his shoulder and fired at the beast's forehead. The entire act was done with precision, as though only one volitional effort had been made. The horse quivered, a tiny spout of blood poured from the bullet wound, and then trickled slowly into the sand.

"That one is out of misery. Go on with your burial ceremony." Fritz walked to the side of the remaining horse, leaned against its side, removed his cap and wiped his forehead with the sleeve of his blouse. The men threw the sand over the dead girl, using their sabres and hands. Soon a sand mound marked the spot. Picard mumbled the prayer for the dead. Beauchamp stood bareheaded in the sunlight gazing mutely down. He did not know how to pray, he was a materialist; also a drunkard and a gambler. Still the fair young child so alone in the desert made him ill.

"Come along men," Fritz broke in. "The world is intended for the living. The dead are taken care of in another way. Picard probably knows how. I'm sure I don't."

He took the bay by the bridle and started on.

"I will lead the horse myself, if you please Monsieur le Lieutenant," Picard began. "I am respon-



sible to the quartermaster for him," he added as Fritz looked at him hard.

"You are responsible to me just at present, my friend. Or at least, I'm responsible for him just now."

"The horse is mine, Monsieur le Lieutenant," Picard said. His face paled. He was talking to an officer. "My life is worth something. There are Arabs all around us. I did not kill your horse."

"Oh! you want to get away and leave us here, your pal Beauchamp and myself?" Fritz answered. His voice was jeering. He looked more closely at Picard. The tall spare figure, the haggard face, yet the intent dark eyes. "Well, come and take him," he went on with a smile. He held the bay by the bridle with one hand and swung the slimy sabre carelessly in the other. "Here, come and take the bridle." He held the bridle toward Picard. Picard did not move. The bay looked stupidly into the distance. "Take it," Fritz said tauntingly. The words went with a smile which were not good to look at. The carbine lay on the sand; Picard picked it up.

"Hoho! my friend. Going to get dangerous, are you?" Fritz went on. "Well, be sure you slip the cartridge in correctly."

Picard opened the chamber. He did not speak. Only his ominous eyes stared into the tormentor's face.



Fritz did not move. He stood now leaning against the bay's girth—tall, graceful, handsome, debonair. He twirled the sabre by its cord, gave it a snap and closed his hand around the hilt.

"It is my horse," Picard repeated doggedly. "I have a right to him."

"You said that before," Fritz broke in. "Well, we are not within touch of headquarters now. Here," he said quickly, "I'll rob this event of its military aspect." He quickly slipped out of his blouse, running the right sleeve over the sabre blade. "Now I have no insignia which should awe you. Come, take the horse." His superb chest with the line down the middle and the tense cord at the shoulder showed through the shirt. Picard hesitated and looked at Beauchamp. Beauchamp grinned. Picard slid a cartridge into the magazine.

"Now, throw it into the chamber," Fritz said calmly. His face had set. The left foot went back a little, the heel ground into the sand and his left hand rested on his hip. Picard raised the carbine. That instant Fritz's sabre flashed through the air and the blade buried in Picard's skull. The carbine fell to the sand. Picard lunged forward on his face as his fingers clutched impotently at the air. Fritz rolled him over on his back with his foot. "The outcome of attacking an officer of the Foreign Legion, Beauchamp. Take a lesson from this. Never attack an officer. Then, too, the horse



can carry only us two. You're no bigger than a shrimp. Come, we will go on."

Beauchamp still remained silent. "Well, do you want to die here, cut up by Arabs, or will you come?" Fritz asked. Beauchamp pointed to the sky. Far off a tiny black spot could be seen. It grew larger and larger, circled about, nearer and nearer, then darted off and disappeared.

"He was my bunkie," Beauchamp said at last. "I will cover him." He began to throw sand over the dead man.

"Those vultures will get through that," Fritz said. "But go on, if it amuses you."

He slipped into his blouse, then he wiped the sabre off in the sand, unhooked the sabre scabbard, threw it away and fastened the bare sabre to the hook at his waist by the ring near the hilt. "Take his cartridge belt and search his pockets," he ordered. Beauchamp handed his superior the cartridge belt and a flask of brandy which he extracted from the dead man's hip pocket. The four canteens held enough water to fill both of theirs and left a liberal drink of water for each besides.

"If we can get the water for this thoroughbred cavalry plug, we stand a chance," Fritz said.

He unfastened the bay's saddle girth, slid the saddle to the ground and rubbed the horse down with the saddle cloth from his own mare. Then he seated himself on the saddle, pulled his cap down over his



eyes and watched Beauchamp covering the dead man with the glittering, sliding sand. It was laborious work. The sand trickled into the garments, into the boots and ran down between the legs. After a time the body and legs were quite covered, but the face, with its staring motionless eyes, was still directed reprovingly into space. Soon Beauchamp let a handful of sand fall on the face. It ran into the open mouth, coated the eyeballs, stuck in the bloody hair. Fritz sat silently watching. Beauchamp hesitated. "Go on, Beauchamp," he said. "Don't show the yellow streak now. You wanted to do it, now finish it. I'm waiting here in danger of having those lousy turbans find us, that you may do a dramatic stunt, but I won't wait forever."

"I was thinking, sir," Beauchamp said slowly, "that maybe it would be better for me to say something they say for the dead. I have heard it. It goes like 'ashes to ashes, dust to dust——'"

"Well, you have dust enough here, that's sure. But you've said it now, so go on."

Beauchamp still hesitated. "I wonder," he said presently, "if maybe,—you might put a little sand on his head. He meant no harm—"

"Beauchamp," Fritz answered, "when a man does a thing like what happened here just now, it is because he has not in his heart what you ask. No, go on. This is your stunt."



Beauchamp did not answer but went on with his work. Fritz looked him over more closely. He was small and thin, with light brown hair, deep set pale blue eyes, sharp nose, sunken cheek and gaunt, ill-made figure. When he spoke his eyes squinted. Soon he had completed the work.

"I am ready, Monsieur le Lieutenant," he said looking over Fritz's head. Something in the expression of his face made Fritz look at him hard.

"Have you any cartridges in your belt?" Fritz asked.

"No, sir."

"Let me have it."

Beauchamp handed over the belt. There was one cartridge left. "You lied, you little fool," Fritz cried. He placed the shell in the dead man's belt and fastened it around his own waist. The sun was getting low, already the shadow of the sand mound over which the mare had stumbled in her last dying effort to stay the goading spur, crept into the little valley with its dead. From somewhere came more dark spots that grew larger and circled and disappeared to come back together and circle again and disappear again.

A faint breeze whirled the sand from the two little mounds. The edge of the dead man's boot stuck out at one place.

"No use, Beauchamp," Fritz said. "They will get them, horses and all." He looked at his com-



panion. The latter gazed silently into space with his shifting, squinting eyes. Just then a whole flock of vultures obscured for a moment the sunlight. The shadow fell on the little valley. A sharp gust of wind blew away yet more of the sand over the dead man. The fingers of the left hand became exposed. Beauchamp looked silently into space and Fritz did not like the expression. He stepped to Beauchamp's side and placed his hand on his shoulder.

"The man who wins is the one who takes nothing for granted. I will spill the contents of that shad belly of yours if I see you make a false move."

Beauchamp did not move.

"Come, Shrimp," Fritz went on. "Saddle the bay."

Beauchamp threw the saddle over the horse's back, buckled it in place, put his foot against the horse's shoulder and pulled the girth tight.

Fritz mounted, took his companion under the shoulder and sat him on the horse's withers.

"I have been in the desert for years," Beauchamp began at last. "I know where there is water and grass."

They started at a walk. The sun was quite near the horizon. A large brilliant star challenged the dying sunlight. The breeze quickened. As the bay sniffed the freshened air, Fritz touched him with the spur and he rose to a canter. And so they



rode on, this strangely-mated pair—one, with the vision of his dead bunkie before his eyes; the other bent on escape, not for itself, but because he wanted to win at everything he tried and would ride the bay under him to the sands, just as he did his own mare, or he would cut his companion's throat without a quiver to win, even though he lived to be killed a little later in a drunken brawl in one of the cafes in Algiers.

Neither spoke, though at times Beauchamp indicated the way with a gesture. The moon crept over the edge of the sand, at first pale, then deepening into lustre as darkness descended. Soon the way was lighted by its silvery rays. The stars came out one by one, until myriads studded the sky as only in Algeria the night sky looks. Still they rode on and on and on.

"Where is this place, Beauchamp?"

"We are almost there now," came the answer.

As he spoke the horse's hoof fall became less harsh, and a shadow loomed against the sky. In a few moments they reached some trees and dismounted on the grass. Beauchamp took the bay by the bridle and led him to a pool of water glittering in the moonlight.

"Unsaddle him, Shrimp," Fritz said.

"I do not like that name, sir," Beauchamp said, quietly.



"You're damned fastidious. Nothing is bad after you get used to it."

Beauchamp silently unsaddled the bay.

"Hobble him with that neck halter."

Beauchamp did as he was bid without a word.

Fritz seated himself on the grass with the carbine beside him. Beauchamp remained standing.

"Sit down, Shrimp, and here, take some of this rot-gut," Fritz said presently. He handed him the flask of brandy.

"I don't care for any brandy, sir."

Fritz took a drink himself and followed it with water from the canteen.

They remained silent for a time. At last Beauchamp spoke:

"It is eighty miles to the nearest relief," he began slowly. "There is not another spring between here and Bou Aroua. The bay cannot carry us both. We have nothing to eat. One of us must stay behind." He stopped.

"Have you a cigarette, Shrimp?" Fritz asked.

Silence fell again. The bay browsed peacefully at the grass near the edge of the pool.

"Those damned niggers would get the man who stayed behind," Fritz began.

"Yes."

"They might get the one who tries to get away," Fritz added.

"Yes."



"They will stop here, some of them by sunrise. They will not come here tonight. They would fear that a lot of us are here."

"Yes."

"Say 'sir,' you damned monkey!" Fritz burst out suddenly.

Beauchamp did not answer.

The moonlight made the scene clearly visible. Beauchamp made a silhouette against the sky.

Fritz pushed the carbine away with his feet.

"Monsieur le Lieutenant," Beauchamp began, "you could shoot me as I stand. I am not fooling myself. One of us is going to die tonight—now, right away. You killed my bunkie." His voice broke a little. "I ask you, for the honor of a French soldier, to let me try to avenge him."

"You mean that you will fight me. Hell, you haven't a shot in earth."

"I ask it for the honor of a French soldier—from one soldier to another."

"You know damned well I wouldn't shoot you. Very well."

Fritz rose and stood now opposite his companion. The latter looked steadily up at his opponent's massive figure. "Here," Fritz said, "take my sabre, it's longer than yours. I will use yours." They both laid their sabres on the ground and silently stripped to the waist. Each picked up a sabre, Fritz taking the shorter. Neither spoke.



They stepped out into the moonlight away from the shadow of the stunted trees. Beauchamp took the initiative, touched lightly his opponent's blade and attacked. For once Fritz ceased his goading. Beauchamp attacked as only an avenger can, viciously, persistently, indeed, so fiercely that Fritz stepped back. Beauchamp's face took on a sneer. That was his bane. Fritz took a parry in second, returned the point and, just as he had foretold, spilled Beauchamp's entrails on the sand. As Beauchamp reeled for an instant, again the blade glistened in the moonlight and crashed into the skull. Fritz watched him claw the sand as he strained to get up. He rose almost to his knees, then lunged forward and lay still.

The bay limped timidly forward with his hobbled legs and sniffed at the prostrate form. Fritz took him by the mane and led him back to the shadow of the trees. Then he walked to the dead man and found his cigarettes, lighted one, and after putting on his shirt and blouse, sat down with his back to a tree. It was getting cooler. He sat and smoked. "Eighty miles to Bou Aroua. That plug will never do it with my weight in a day," he muttered. He took account of stock. There were the carbine, for which he had only two shells, which were in Picard's belt, his sabre, two canteens, the flask of brandy quite full and the vivandiere's cask half full, but no food. He went on smoking. The



night air became chill, making him shiver. He unrolled the blanket attached to the saddle and wrapped it around his shoulders, took a drink from the flask, followed it with some water from the pool and went to sleep.

When he awoke a gray streak in the East marked the dawning day. He rose, took a drink from the flask, bathed his face in the pool, made the bay drink, rolled the brandy cask in the blanket and fastened it to his saddle. Then he saddled the bay, fastened the sabre to his side, filled the two canteens with water, blew his breath into the bay's nostrils, swung into the saddle and rode north, aslant the rising sun.

The dead man lay face down on the sand. Fritz shrugged his shoulders as he rode by. As the bay shied, he pulled him back impatiently. "You are working for the living now. Go on." He drove the spur into the side away from the dead man and galloped on.

The sun rose higher and higher, and with it came the heat. The bay stuck bravely to his work and mile after mile passed under the galloping hoofs—up over the sand mounds, across the little valleys and on again. At times Fritz let him blow out. Once he dismounted, unsaddled and rubbed the sweating hide with the saddle cloth, let it dry in the sun, remounted and went on. Not a living thing met his eyes. When he walked his mount he



took a drink from the canteen. At times he drew on the brandy. At noon the bay began to flag. Fritz dismounted and looked him over. The nostrils were red, the flanks covered with sweat. Where the bridle touched the neck a soapy lather had formed and run down the heaving chest to the knees. The whites of the eyes were blood-shot. The tongue hung out of the side of the mouth, covered with a dark gummy mass.

“Well, he’ll have to go to the end. If I rest him he will be no better off. I guess I’ll force him as far as he’ll go.” He looked about. Not a tree, not a bush, not a leaf in sight, only the never-ending expanse of lurid sand. He rubbed the bay’s dry tongue with his fingers moistened from the canteen. The horse licked at his wrist. He led him by the bridle for a space. He judged he had covered half the distance to Bou Aroua. He had never been there, but knew there was a convent at the edge of the desert located at the place Beuchamp had mentioned. He drank again from the flask, unbuckled the blanket and refilled the flask with brandy. The bay began to limp. A shoe had become loose. With some difficulty he removed the iron rim from the hoof. The hoof felt hot. The bay held the hoof off the sand. He pulled her forward by the bridle. She was still lame. “And another forty miles to go.” He took another drink of brandy. The alcohol mounted to his head.



Twenty-four hours without food began to tell. The blazing sun, the lurid sand made him dizzy. He steadied himself against the bay. The bay stopped and turned his big eyes toward him. He swung into the saddle.

"You'll have to go," he muttered, driving the spur home. The bay closed up for an instant and then galloped lamely on. The pace was slower now, yet the beast struggled on—the bridle loose, the head getting nearer the ground. Fritz pushed him on. After a time the limp became grosser, so that the rider maintained his seat with difficulty. Yet he covered another ten miles. The bay pulled up standing on three legs. The goading spur only made him quiver.

Fritz dismounted. "You're a sorry looking plug," he said. He unswung the carbine, slipped a shell into the chamber and shot him through the head, then he threw the carbine away, unfastened the blanket with its cask of brandy and emptied one of the canteens down his throat, the other he swung from his shoulder and trudged north. After a time he reached a good sized sand mound which threw a shadow. He lay down in the shade and took a drink of brandy and water. The sun was less intense. He fell asleep. When he awakened his eyes met the stars. The moon was climbing toward the dome. He got up. "The devil," he muttered as he staggered, "thirty miles to do. Got to



brace up." He took a long drink of brandy, picked up the blanket and trudged on. His mouth became parched. Although he tried to conserve the contents of the canteen, shaking elicited an ominously increasing hollowness. His tremendous strength began to dilute. "Damn the thing anyway," he said audibly, "I believe I'm pegging out." He repeatedly drank from the brandy flask. Yet he made ten miles in three hours. Still he kept on. The blanket began to irk him. He unrolled it from the cask and threw it away. The cask he fastened to his canteen strap. His watch read midnight. "I can make another ten miles before daybreak," he thought. He looked up at the starlit sky. "The lip of the dipper points to the North Star," he muttered. Then with a smile, "That old dope of a tutor in astronomy was of some use. Here's to his health." He drank long from the brandy flask, emptying it.

"No use to carry two rum receptacles," he laughed, with that uncontrollable tendency to be facetious in disregard of conditions, and threw the empty flask toward the moon. "Some lousy Arab will get the glint of your silvery rays on this some night and think he's found a topaz," he laughed. "Then he'll know he's only found the cause of the curse of nations," he added. "Well, go along Fritz, old sport." He loosened his blouse about the neck and tightened the belt at the waist, the cartridge



belt he threw away. Once more he set his great square shoulders and trudged on over the shifting sands, with his heavy booted feet leaving a trail soon to be obliterated by the vagrant winds.

The moon slid to the western horizon and darkness closed gradually in. A faint streak of light brightened the edge of his field of vision and spread rapidly out like an enormous fan. He halted, drew a long deep breath and drank a mouthful of water. He had not rested since midnight. He knew his pace well enough. "Well done, Dev, old boy. That ten miles deserves peaceful slumber on the right forearm of the queen of courtesans. Camille, my lying, deceiving rip of hell, I drink to you and your allure." He let the brandy run from the cask into his mouth. The pink of the nearing sun crept into the sky. "See, Camille, that is the pink of your lips." The brandy rose to his brain. The pinkish hue deepened into crimson. "And that is the carmine which comes when I kiss them into life, your rouge-pot notwithstanding," he added with a loud thick laugh. "Fritz, you're drunk. Come, old blazing, glittering maker of crops and reaper of dead soldiers, shove your luminous disc into space. I drink a welcome to you."

The sun rose majestically over the horizon. He let the cask slip to his hip as he wiped his lips with the back of the gauntlet. He raised his hand to his visor, gazed defiantly into the increasing sun-



light, waved his hand at the sand and trudged on. The pace was slower, however. Several times he stumbled. Once he caught the spur of the opposite instep and tore a hole through the boot into the flesh. He stopped and examined the hurt. Blood oozed through the torn leather.

"I ought to take them off," he mused. "Yet I will walk into that bunch of isolated worshippers with glove and spur or know the reason why." He rose, took another drink of brandy, followed it with a little water and started on. As he raised his hand he saw the dome of a building encroaching on the sky. The sun caused a tiny glittering spot on its top. "Insignia of my namesake's opponent, I send you greeting. Glitter on and lead me at least where they have things to go into the stomach, if not the soul."

It was yet a good ten miles to Bou Aroua. His knowledge of distances caught from his experience told him that. He became faint again. The wound in his foot hurt him sorely. "I suppose if that bay plug had a carbine now he'd want to put me out of misery." He was actually drunk now, but plodded on, dry lipped, haggard, dizzy, but determined. A mile farther on the sabre caught between his legs, throwing him headlong on his face. He rose blowing the sand from his teeth. "I know a dozen boulevardiers who would give a small fortune for my thirst," he mumbled thickly. He unscrewed



the cap of the canteen and emptied it down his throat and threw it away. There was a little brandy left in the cask. Two miles farther on he emptied that too, threw it into the air and split it open with his sabre. The little red cross on the cask head caught the sunlight. He picked up the circular piece of wood and scaled it across the sands. It struck on the edge, rolled along for a distance and lay still. He laughed a boyish gleeful laugh and staggered incoordinately on.



## CHAPTER X.

By noon he lunged into the deserted courtyard of the convent at Bou Aroua, looked helplessly about, and opened the first door he saw. The rich full notes of an organ greeted him. For a moment the darkened space made him blind. When he could see, his eyes fell on the figure of a girl seated at the organ. Her back was toward him, the rigid pose of the head suggested fixed attention, yet was not the immovable vitalized posture of the transported. As he stepped forward his heavy boot struck the floor and the spur grated harshly on the polished wood. The player turned toward the light. The brilliant Algerian sun shone full on motionless eyeballs.

"God! she is blind," Fritz whispered. The intent, placid, wondering expression arrested the next step. She reached out a slender tapering hand toward where the sound came from. "You are a stranger here. Your footfall is heavy and tinged with a new sound. Tell me, who are you, and why do you come here." She spoke softly as though the sound of her voice needed never to carry far, as though she spoke only to what was close to her.

Fritz did not move. "What an affliction, yet how beautiful she is," he thought. He half turned to-



ward the door, hesitated and faced again toward the organ. Better to have turned on and gone. Better to have staggered his drunken body on alone, on into the heat and thirst of the North African desert, better to have dragged his accursed appetites on and on, till he, too, sank down, to be buried forever under the ever-shifting sands. He felt suddenly dizzy, and resting his hand on the altar rail, stepped heavily toward the front pew. The girl still held her hand out, as though groping in the dark. The hand followed him, the fingers bent as though beckoning. The gown was open at the neck, the white skin glistened in the sunlight. The bosom fell and rose with the breath. The momentary syncope left him. He sank down on the bench. The sabre rattled against the woodwork. He rested his chin on his clenched hand, the elbow on the back of the bench.

"I am a soldier of France," he began at last. "Lost and in need of help. I have come for miles and miles and miles again, under the blazing sun, under the cold distant stars. The North Star led me here. My comrades are dead." The girl put her hand to her neck.

"Your voice is strange to me," she answered. "I have never heard a voice like that before. The note is in my organ, here in the middle." She turned and struck a full rich note on the keyboard. "Your comrades are dead," she said suddenly. "Dead out



there in the desert?" Her head bent forward and the lips moved.

Fritz watched her silently. "Can you do a chord from Asher's Ave Maria?" he asked, as her hands rested on the keyboard

She struck it at once with rare accuracy, merging the deeper notes well into the treble.

"Go on," he said as she rested the music for a moment. "I have heard only the blare of the bugle and the beat of the tambour for, it seems, an eternity."

The fumes from the brandy were leaving him. The overwhelming fatigue, dulled for a time, reasserted itself and the burning thirst made his mouth feel like a furnace. "Give me some water," he asked with a shade of tremor in his voice. "A lot of water."

She rose quickly and felt her way toward the door. As she passed him he drew his dust-covered boots back that she might not fall, and steadied her with his begauntleted hand on her smooth white arm.

"Come," she said in the same faint, toneless voice. "We will find water." She led him out of the door across the dusty court to the main building. He still held her arm. "I will wait here," he said, releasing her at the door. A moment later a gray-gowned nun emerged with a jar of water. Fritz stood leaning one hand against the well, the



other resting on the hilt of his sabre, the shoulders bent forward. The nun came close to him.

"You are fatigued, Monsieur le Lieutenant," she said gently, glancing at the tarnished little bar at the collar of his blouse. She handed him the jar. He raised it toward his mouth, clicked his heels together, bowed slightly toward the wondering nun, and drank deep and full. The nun noted the tanned muscular neck, streaked with sweaty dust, the deep blue eyes, the heavy eyebrow, the massive heaving chest. Her eyes fell to his boots, blood and dust covered the one. She gave a little cry.

"You are wounded, Monsieur." She stepped closer and placed her hand on his arm.

"No," he said harshly, "it is only a scratch." He reeled, however, and kept erect only by steadying himself against the wall. The blind girl stood mutely in the door frame.

"Come," the nun said, "you must have rest." She led him into the darkened corridor, along a long wall, and opened the door of a large room situated at one end of a wing of the convent. "You will find water and soap. I will send food to you soon."

The room was large and cool, furnished with an iron bed, a dresser, a chair and a wash-stand. A crucifix hung over the bed. Fritz threw himself on the bed, he wanted rest more than anything in the world, and soon fell into deep, restful sleep. A knocking at the door awakened him. The nun



who had brought him the water was standing in the hall. She held a tray of food and a bottle of claret. "I tried to make you answer, Monsieur," she explained. "You did not hear me. I thought you might need sleep most, so let you alone. Now you must eat."

Fritz took the tray and refreshed himself with the cold meat, bread and claret. Then he removed his clothing, washed the wound in his instep, dressed it with the napkin from the tray, washed himself at the basin, found one of Beauchamp's cigarettes and let the smoke rise lazily in the still, half-lighted room. It thinned out into long tapering clouds. One of them rose, moved by a current of air, floated slowly over the bed, grazed the crucifix and merged into the air. He watched its guidanceless drift. As it touched the crucifix he laughed, his old gay, impudent laugh. Some one knocked at the door.

"Come in."

A tall slender priest stepped in. Fritz rose somewhat stiffly. "I have the honor to greet you, sir," he said with that veneer of politeness he knew so well to clothe himself with.

"I arrived last night," the priest said, looking critically at the soldier. "I came from Benoud. I come here at long intervals. Sister tells me you are wounded. I am somewhat of a physician. I would be glad to be of service to you." He had



come closer and now stooped down to look at the bandaged foot.

"It is only a spur scratch, thank you. I have dressed it." The priest rose. "You must have more air in here. It is close and stuffy." He walked to the window, opened it and pulled up the Venetian blind. "The sun is getting low. The heat is less intense," he added. The strong light fell on his black robed figure. He was extremely slender and had his shoulders not stooped, would have been quite as tall as Fritz. The sunlight fell on thick gray hair, a leathery complexion, deeply marked with scars of small-pox, a thin hooked nose, wide, well-formed lips, and glorious dark eyes. He smiled as he turned toward the room, displaying white, even, strong teeth.

Fritz had remained standing. "I am Friederich Manteufel," he began, "first lieutenant of cavalry, Sixty-ninth Regiment, Second Battalion, stationed mostly at Algiers." The priest had started to approach the soldier as he began to speak. When he told his name, he stopped, brought his hand to his lips, and stood gazing fixedly into the other's eyes.

"Has my fame reached even here, into the desert, that you need stand aghast like that, Monsieur le Abbe?" Fritz asked.

"It is a queer name, sir," the priest answered, now quite calm again.

"Oh! I see," Fritz answered. "My pals call me



‘Dev.’ I forgot, it must be a bit disconcerting to meet a presumably fabled enemy face to face. But come, tell me. Whom have I the honor of addressing?”

“I am the Abbe Herrara, in the service of God.”

“Herrara, that is a Spanish name. You are a Jesuit, sir?”

“Yes, I am a Jesuit. My parishioners are mostly Arabs. I teach them the way our Great Redeemer went. I have little intercourse with white men. That accounts for my thoughtlessness in keeping you standing so long. Pray be seated.”

Fritz sat on the edge of the bed and waved the priest to the chair.

“I judge from your appearance, Monsieur le Abbe, that you have a razor and that sort of thing with you. If you will let me have an opportunity to use your toilet set I will be obliged. I have sufficient of the Parisian habit left to want to be presentable, even to nuns. That reminds me. Who is the blind girl I saw in the chapel? If the nuns had her affliction I fancy I would not care how I looked.” The priest listened quietly to the young man’s rambling talk. He did not answer at once.

“Some mystery of the church, is it? Well, if that’s the case, count on my discretion,” Fritz laughed. His old method of goading oozed from him.

“Pardon me, Monsieur le Lieutenant,” the priest



answered, with a sudden glitter in his sombre quiet eyes, "the church needs no discretion shown. The girl is a ward of the church. Indeed, my ward." His stooped shoulders straightened for an instant as he said it. "She is an orphan, sorely afflicted. She spends her sightless life here playing the organ and living at peace, getting ready for her greater life, where she will see only the beautiful. Her dark days here mean a glorious awakening."

"She has my best wishes, I'm sure, sir. Will you smoke?"

"Do not let me rob you, Monsieur le Lieutenant. I have a number of cigarettes in my bag. You, I fancy, are not overstocked. I will send you a supply with my shaving set."

"I suppose it is not in accord with the etiquette of the desert to ask strangers questions," Fritz began. "I will tell you, however, how and why I came here."

"It is not the habit of the servants of God to ask questions," the priest answered. "We are ready to hear what our children tell us. I will be glad to hear your tale, and perhaps aid you."

The sonorous notes of the organ came in through the open window.

The priest rose. "They have late vespers here because of the heat. Will you join us in the chapel, Monsieur le Lieutenant, or would you prefer to rest? You still look fatigued."



"I will rest for a time longer, if you please."

The prelude of Bach set to an Ave Maria by Gounod stole into the chamber, borne on the quickening breeze from the desert. The player merged the obligato with singular skill.

"I will send my man to you with what you need," the priest said. The peculiar quality of his voice made an accord with an accentuated note in the theme from the organ. He walked to the door. "I will come back later and hear your tale. God be with you." He raised a slender white hand—the hand of a student, which is gloved when it goes with the tanned cheek.

Fritz bowed. "I will ask for something to drink while you are gone. It will no doubt be waiting for you when you come. Au revoir." He waved his hand with his easy attractive grace. The priest bowed on the door sill, looking like a ghost from the anteroom of the Vatican.

Fritz lighted a fresh cigarette and walked to the window. The organist went on into a sonata of Chopin's. A double file of gray gowned nuns crossed the court yard and slowly entered the chapel. In a moment the priest followed and the music ceased. Fritz threw the stump of his cigarette into the yard and watched the smoke mingle with the tiny sand cloud raised by the impact as it struck. "That girl has the soul of a musician in her fingers—the compensation of nature," he said



half aloud. He turned to the room. A tall thin Arab stood in the door. He held in his hand a bundle done up in a towel.

"Come in, oh, pest of the desert," Fritz called with a laugh. "You are from the man of God, are you?"

The Arab drew nearer. "I am the servant of the servant of God," he answered in excellent French. "I am to serve you."

"Very well," Fritz answered, not in the least abashed. The Arab placed the contents of his bundle on the dresser. Poured water into the wash basin and made things ready with the skill of a French valet. "I wonder if they have a Louis in Arabia," Fritz mused. Then aloud, "Rub up these boots, and here." as he quickly disrobed, "brush up this faded blue." The Arab took the clothing and disappeared. Fritz shaved and washed. The Arab had brought a little "first-aid" package. In it Fritz found some plaster. He took the napkin off his foot. "That shows how sterile this damned desert is," he said with a smile. "It hasn't bugs enough to infect a wound." He sealed the tiny holes in his instep with a strip of plaster.

The Arab brought back the clothes. "Anything more?" he asked, after rearranging the room.

"Yes, get some claret and water, and bring me some writing material." The Arab withdrew. Fritz completed his attire, lowered the Venetian



blind, and threw himself down on the bed. In a few moments he was fast asleep. When he awoke it was dark. For a moment he did not know where he was. He rose, groped about, and knocked over the little table in the centre of the room. The next moment the Arab stood in the door with an oil lamp in his hand.

"What time is it?" Fritz asked.

"Eight o'clock, sir. Will you have the claret now?"

"Yes, and tell the Abbe Herrara I would be glad to see him." Soon the priest came in, followed by the Arab with the claret, a gourd of water and the writing material. He placed the tray on the table. "I will bring you some food soon," he said, and disappeared.

The priest pulled up the Venetian blind. The moonlight flooded the room. "Sit in your chair," the priest said. "I will stand here by the window. The moon on the sand is glorious."

"I was with the Fouchard relief column," Fritz began. "We were a squadron of cavalry. For three days all went well. On the fourth day we were attacked by a large number of Arabs. I don't know how many. We were cut to pieces. As you see, I managed to get away. Whether anyone else did or not, I don't know."

"There are dead soldiers out there in the desert," the priest put in. "God have mercy on their souls."



"Well, I guess the vultures have got their bodies by this time. However, that is a small sacrifice compared to the advantages accrued to the true faith."

"The way of the cross has ever been a thorny one, Monsieur le Lieutenant."

"I'm in the soldier business as a diversion, Monsieur le Abbe. However, I want to get word to headquarters at Ath Sefra. When Jean Baptiste Moreau, our esteemed department commander, hears of this there will be enough dead Arabs in one spot to fertilize a new oasis. I will write a report at once. The journey to Benoud can be made in one night with a good horse. From there my report can be wired to Ath Sefra. They will send a detachment with fresh cattle for me. What can you do?"

"I am leaving tonight," the priest answered, "for my home. I will take your report. It can be made by daylight. Write your report. See," he added, pointing out of the window, "already our horses are ready."

Fritz looked out. Two horses were tied to an iron ring in the wall of the main building. They both looked as though distance was a small matter to them. The Arab came in with food.

"I will wait until you eat, Monsieur le Lieutenant," the priest said politely.

"Thank you, I am hungry." Fritz ate with the



speed of the soldier, shoved the tray aside and let the pen run rapidly over the paper. The priest stood yet at the window looking out on the never-ending sand.

"Here, Monsieur le Abbe," Fritz said, after a time. He handed the priest the report. "I will do myself the honor of seeing you off." He held the door open as the priest passed out and followed to the court-yard. As they approached the horses the Arab stepped up.

"When you get there," Fritz said, "go to the telegraph station. Tell the telegraph operator to send the wire through at once."

The two men swung into the saddle. The toneless voice of the organist came from the door. "You are leaving, Father?" it said. The next moment the girl stood on the threshold with the bright white moonlight shining full on her sightless eyeballs.

"Yes, child," the priest answered gently. "God keep you."

Fritz removed his cap. The motion caused the priest to look into his face. "If you were strong enough I would lend you my horse," Monsieur le Lieutenant," he said. "Al Raschid could go with you."

"That would not hasten matters," Fritz answered. "It might save the detachment forty miles, but I guess it will do them no harm to have the experience, and anyway, the Government ought to



pay some tribute to the survivor of that mess. No, go ahead." Silently the priest turned his head and rode into the moonlit desert.

The girl still stood in the doorway listening to the fading hoofbeats.

"What is your name?" Fritz asked her.

"My name is Leah, sir."

"Leah—the forsaken," Fritz whispered. "She is well named."

The girl's acute ears had caught the words. "I am not forsaken. I am waiting, sir," she answered.

Silence fell. The mysterious awe-inspiring silence of the desert.

"I prayed for your dead comrades today in the chapel," the toneless voice began. She raised her white hands to her breast. "They are at peace with the Lord."

"How long have you been here?" Fritz asked.

"Always."

"Always in these walls, always under this blazing sky, under the silent stars. Great God."

"They must be beautiful," the girl answered simply. "The sisters tell me they are beautiful. But though I cannot see them, I can feel them. I feel the hot dry sand, the sun, the wind, the night air. The wind speaks to me. Everything speaks to me. I answer with my organ. Sometimes the simoom comes, the sisters pray then for the men in the desert. I play for them on my organ."



"How old are you, Mademoiselle Leah?" Fritz asked.

"I am eighteen. Your voice has changed. It is not the same note. Are you thinking of your dead comrades?"

Fritz did not answer.

"They are at peace with the Lord. You must not mourn them. God loves them more than you did."

"And you have no one but the sisters to look after you?"

"Oh! yes. Father Herrara comes, and at times men come who are going into the desert." She moved nearer to him and stood now quite close. Her hair reached quite to his ear. He noted the round arm, the full white neck, the beautiful calm symmetrical face, the straight eyebrow and the wealth of light brown hair. "What an accursed outrage," he thought.

"Hark!" she said suddenly. "I hear hoof-beats. A single horse. Do you hear it?"

He strained his ears. "No, I cannot hear them."

"They are coming nearer. Listen, can you hear them now?"

"Yes."

They waited, the hoof sounds came nearer and nearer. Soon the horseman appeared, a dark image before the silver sand. A few moments later Abbe Herrara rode up. "I have changed my mind," he said. "Al Raschid has gone on with your report. I



will stay here until tomorrow." He dismounted and led his horse away.

"His voice was strange to me," the girl said. "Good night, Monsieur," she added, holding out her hand toward the door frame.

Fritz reached out, took the hand in his, bent down and kissed the white smooth wrist. The girl gave a little cry, but did not withdraw her hand.

"I will play that tomorrow in the chapel," she murmured. The voice had an added sound in it.

The priest stepped up. "Come, Monsieur le Lieutenant, we will have our claret and water."

"I am at your disposition, Monsieur le Abbe."

The girl felt her way into the darkness of the convent.



## CHAPTER XI.

THE sun stole toward the western rim. A faint breeze stirred the fringe on the edge of the window curtain. Friederich Manteufel rose lazily, stretched his long arms and pulled up the blinds. The sound from the organ greeted him. A little smile disturbed the corners of his mouth. He slipped into his blouse, took up his cap and stepped toward the door. A knock arrested his footsteps.

"Come in."

The Abbe Herrara came in. "There is still no news from Ath Sefra," he said. "No, but I fancy something will turn up tonight or tomorrow. You could have my horse if you are anxious to get back."

"You seem to be anxious to have me start, Monsieur le Abbe. You have alluded to means of transportation for me with a persistence which justifies the conclusion that you would like me to leave."

The priest sat down. "I take the liberty of lighting a cigarette," he answered in his deep soft voice.

"You will excuse me, Monsieur le Abbe, I am stepping out for a moment."

"You are going again to the chapel? It is hot there, won't you sit here with me for a while?"

"No, thank you. I prefer to go to the chapel."

A grayish hue crept over the priest's tanned



cheek. "I am the custodian of her soul," he said, his voice yet even and soft. Only the great luminous eyes took on a sombre glow.

A frown came on Fritz's face. "The custody of the church is nothing to me. You will permit me to state that I am going to the chapel. You have obtruded yourself into my affairs for three days. If it pleases me to enjoy this child I will do so irrespective of your meddling."

"She is a pure child. I have hoped to save her from contamination. Since you came here she has changed. Can you not spare this poor, blind child? Think of her affliction." He raised his hand as Fritz opened his mouth to answer. "You are a man of another world. Soon you go back into it again. I ask you to leave her with her peace and hope. Already her mind is disturbed. I have seen more than you think. It would be a sin to have her know of things that she cannot see."

"I shall offer you no explanation of my conduct nor my intent. You do not extend a directorate over her, at least you won't as far as I am concerned. You kept her for eighteen years buried in this God-forsaken desert. Where did you get the right to do this? This is a greater sin. But we are talking to no end. You will excuse me." He stepped toward the door.

The priest rose quickly and stood between Fritz and the door. "One moment," he began in a low



voice, so low that Fritz leaned forward to hear him better. "I saw you hold her in your arms last night. I saw her blind eyes close. I saw her lips rise to yours. I saw her body cling to you. Monsieur le Lieutenant, take my warning. You are on the brink of a calamity."

"Spying, were you? Well, you saw something for your pains. Stand back from that door. I will go to her and I will take her away from here, to any place I please, and you can draw the circle of your church around her all you like. You are not a Richelieu of the desert; at least you have not an effeminate French king to play with. Stand back." For a moment silence fell into the convent room.

The priest stared into the soldier's eyes. "I warn you."

"Hark!" Fritz broke in. "Hoof beats." He stepped to the window. "See," he went on. "See! there they come. My soldiers, my comrades of the Foreign Legions. I will take her tonight, out under the Algerian stars. And I will kiss her beautiful full lips again and again."

"Stop," the priest cried. There was a genuine menace in his voice. "You do not know who she is——"

"I don't care a damn who she is. She'll be mine from now on." The priest stepped closer to Fritz, who stood still at the window. A calvacade of troopers were galloping over the sand toward the con-



vent. One of them waved his hand as they drew nearer. Fritz gave an answering shout. "Ride into the court, sergeant, and dismount your men. You see there are nine, eight privates and a sergeant. They will make a formidable escort to my beautiful Leah and myself. Come, accept the situation like a sport. You know I'll do it anyway."

"There must be a gentle cord in you," the priest began slowly. He stood with his back to the door, the arms spread out as though by sheer force he would stay the younger man's intent. "There has been no sin in what I have done. The sin was before me. I have carried the burden of another's sin that God might have a pure soul come to him from affliction."

"I am not the judge of your motives. I know I will take the girl tonight."

The troopers in the court could be heard unsaddling the cattle. One gruff voice rang out, "Steady, you spavined plug! Whoa!" it said. "Here, Raol, help me hold this Government charger; he's pulling my arms out." A shout of laughter came from several throats. The priest remained at the door.

"Listen to me one moment. If after what I say you still take the girl from the custody of these good nuns, take her and God help you."

"Go on. Make it short. I want to inject a little of the fear of God into those troopers. They have not had the restraining influence of a commissioned



officer for several days. You know about 'when the cat's away, etc.'" He stepped to the window. The refractory horse, a powerful roan with a wicked eye, was giving two troopers a lot of trouble. One of them had hold of the neck halter and was systematically choking the beast, the other had him by the nostrils and was trying to shut off what little air might not be cut off by the halter.

"Mount him, you ass!" Fritz yelled, "and canter him around the court till he has some of the ginger taken out of him. Here, stop your infernal racket," he added as the men yelled with glee at the trooper's unsuccessful attempt to mount the ugly brute. "Here, you runt, that one with the galley mug, shut up, or I'll trouble your digestion with your teeth," Fritz yelled now, quite annoyed at the evident lack of discipline. The men immediately subsided, the trooper managed to mount the roan and galloped him off into the desert.

"No, sir," Fritz addressed the priest, who was still standing against the door, gray-faced, haggard, determined. "Now go on with your tale. I'll give you two minutes."

"The minutes you will live now will be branded into your soul so deep that you will have them come up from nothing again, and again and again. You have invaded this peaceful sphere with your brutal disregard for everything except the gratification of



your own appetites," he paused for a moment and passed his beautiful white hand across his forehead.

Fritz stood silently listening, something had touched a chord which he had never had vibrated before. The impression died almost at its birth. "Go on," he said, with his steady clear dominating voice. His sabre lay on the table. He took it up now and swung it from the ring near the hilt from the little hook in his belt. "It's strange, but troops obey more readily when an officer has the bare steel in sight." He drew his shirt from his belt with a motion of his shoulders. "Well, my esteemed enemy, go on, I am waiting."

"I ask you once more. I am a worker in the darkness. Do not go ruthlessly on. Pause now, before it is too late. I say it as a servant of God. Ride on into the desert with your men. Scatter the sands, ride under the stars. Go back to your world. Leave this sightless child alone with us. Later on, when you are older, you can reflect upon your generosity. It is not much I ask. It is no aggrandisement to you to take this child from a feeble priest."

Fritz laughed his loud sonorous laugh. He walked over to the priest, who was still standing by the door. "I will take that girl out of this hell hole tonight and ride her on the pommel of my saddle, even as I said. Under the stars, over the glit-



tering endless sands, under the pallid moon, and I will show her that the sense of sight is not the only one to be gratified."

"Very well. I have done my best. Listen to me for another moment, Monsieur le Lieutenant of the Foreign Legion. Eighteen years ago this child was born in France, the daughter of a woman of our faith. Her father is a man who now lives in New York City. His name is Ernst Ferdinand Mantefel.

Fritz had stepped to the centre table when the priest began. He turned facing the priest as he listened. The next moment his great tall frame lunged forward. "You lie, you bible-backed, sniveling monk. You lie, damn you." He took the priest by the throat, encircling the slender neck with his powerful tapering hands. "I'll ram that lie down your neck till it chokes you."

The priest's face became purple. He made no resistance. His long white hands hung limp by his sides. Fritz lifted him up by the neck and threw him violently on the floor, where he lay gasping wildly for breath. After a time the purple color gave way to red, then pink and ultimately a death-like pallor spread over the thin, haggard face with its glorious luminous eyes smouldering like dying embers. Fritz watched him from his towering height, one hand resting on the little table, the other held out from his side ready to move, the massive



shoulders thrown forward, the head slightly bent, a picture of latent force, of ready brutality. All this crowned with the well made head, the wide blue eyes with the deep furrow between the eyebrows.

"Can you hear me now, Monsieur le Abbe?" he asked.

No answer.

"Answer me or I'll make you hear. Can you hear me now?"

The priest nodded his head.

"Get up," Fritz said violently. He took the priest by the collar of his cossack and yanked him to his feet, then flung him forcibly into the chair, though he had to steady him to prevent the chair from going over. Silence again stole into the room. The priest sat still. Only his chest labored heavily for air.

"Tell me more of this," Fritz began. "If I thought it possible,— No, it is utterly, absolutely, impossible."

"Yet you believe it in your heart," the priest said faintly. "You know now as I look at you, as you look at me, that it is true. Now if you want to take her, go on."

"Yes, by God, now I'll take her more than ever. I'll take her out of this hole on and on under stars and moon and sun, away from here to where she belongs. By the eternal God, I'll make her life what it should be."



"It can be nothing with her sightless eyes."

"It can be a damned sight more than it is here. Playing the organ for your rotten ritual and your nuns, or perchance for some overfed prelate. Not much. Ho! sergeant." He ran to the window. "Feed your cattle and that riffraff of a corporal's guard. Water the horses. Break into the damned nunnery and feed yourselves. Take anything in sight. Raise such hell as was never seen. We start at sunset." He turned to the priest, who was yet sitting silently on the chair. "You will see how they will obey me." He unhooked the bare blade from his waist, split the mirror with a sweep, kicked the door open with his heavy booted foot and strode out of the room.

Just as the sun went down they rode off. The Lieutenant of the Foreign Legion at the head of a column of eight troopers and a sergeant. One great strong horse carried the Lieutenant, and on its withers was a figure carefully covered up. She leaned her head against the rider's shoulder, but he did not kiss the full young lips.

In the convent room the shadows deepened. A bent figure sat silently and alone with a seared chin resting on a slender white hand. In the nunnery many prayers went up to heaven, and out on the desert the moon shone on a troop of horsemen slowly riding north.



## CHAPTER XII.

AT Ath Sefra Fritz found that a tent city had sprung up like mushrooms since he left. Artillery, cavalry and infantry were deploying in the open fields. A division of thirteen thousand troops had been bumped over the single track railway in a week. Orderlies on sweating horses galloped back and forth carrying large oblong envelopes in their belts. Infantry soldiers stood around in groups, at the end of company streets, near the field kitchens. The company cooks were busily engaged stirring bean soup in enormous pots, while others turned greasy looking chunks of meat over wood fires.

Shoes, boots and leggings were covered with dust. In one company street two dogs were fighting viciously. A group of soldiers encouraged them with yells of laughter and profane language. A giant first sergeant of cavalry elbowed his way to the contestants. He picked a dog up in either hand. They remained locked. One, a white bull bitch, had the other, a mongrel, by the throat. The mongrel had the bitch by the foreleg. The sergeant swung the mongrel by the tail, bringing the bull against a tent post. The bull let go. So did the mongrel. The bull remained lying on the sand,



panting heavily. "That is my dog," a tall lean infantry man said, indicating the mongrel, which the sergeant still held by the tail. The beast was badly cut and blood dripped from a gaping wound in the throat.

"Take your relative then," the sergeant said. He swung the dog by the tail and brought the wriggling bloody mess across the infantry man's face. The latter sputtered like a man who has been pushed overboard. The sergeant picked up the bull bitch and walked on. The bystanders dispersed, most of them laughing. The sergeant went on to his quarters.

No one paid any attention to Fritz and the girl he was leading by the hand.

At last an infantry soldier who was washing his undergarments in a pail, told him where to find the commanding officer's quarters.

Fritz presented himself at the General's tent. He was sitting under his tent flap dictating to a clerk in duck trousers and flannel shirt, who was punching away at a portable typewriter fastened to the end of a long trunk. Fritz told the commander enough of his tale to obtain transportation to Algiers.

"We will move the entire troop except a rear guard tomorrow," the General said finally. "Sorry you can't serve with me. But under the circumstances you had best return. Fouchard was killed.



Twenty men got away and made El Mangur. They were in bad shape when they arrived. We got the first news of the calamity through you from Benoud. I congratulate you on your escape. Give my compliments to Moreau. If you feel like coming back I will be glad to have you on my staff."

"I have one more request to make," Fritz said. "I want to wire to Algiers a message to be cabled from there. Can I have the wire used for that purpose?"

"Orderly, my signal officer," the General called.

A neatly uniformed youth appeared in a moment.

"Clear the Perragaux for a message which Monsieur Lieutenant Manteufel will give you," the General ordered. "I beg your pardon. Lieutenant Ricord, allow me to present you to one of the survivors of Oglat-Tulla."

The men shook hands. Fritz thanked the commander and went with Ricord to the telegraph tent. Twenty instruments were clicking away with such a din that it seemed incredible that any of the operators could read a word. However, most of them were calmly smoking pipes and industriously making pencil marks on little yellow pads.

Fritz wrote on a piece of yellow paper:

"General Jean Baptiste Moreau. Via Perragaux. Cable Ernst Ferdinand Manteufel. Start for Paris at once. Find letter at Recamier's headquarters which will explain. FRITZ."



A lean sergeant of signal corps took the message. He smoked a limp looking cigarette, while another stuck behind his ear.

"Is this to be coded?" he asked Ricord.

"No; universal method," Fritz answered. "I do not want any mistake in transcription."

"Will you dine with us at headquarters," Ricord asked Fritz as they elbowed their way through the group of orderlies crowding into the signal tent.

"No, thank you. I have a lady whom I am taking to Algiers. I will procure food for her at the Canteen."

A drunken Zouave obstructed the way. Fritz kicked him aside. The Zouave landed on his face in the dust.

Fritz yanked him to his feet. "That will teach you manners, you drunken idiot," he said. "Au revoir, Ricord," he added, holding out his hand to the young signal officer, who was gazing admiringly at the tall staff officer. "Disembowel a couple of those black bastards for me when you get at it." He waved his hand and returned to his blind sister, who was sitting beside the soldier with his pail, waiting patiently in the glaring sun.

At the railroad station an orderly approached Fritz with a message from Moreau.

"Have wired for special car to be affixed to train at Perragaux. God bless you." It read.

Fritz put his arm around the tall girl who was



standing beside him. She leaned her head against his shoulder.

"We will soon be where you will have rest, Leah," he said gently.

"I go where you lead me, Friederich," she answered. "And God goes with us both."

On the train Fritz wrote the entire tale to his father. "Come as fast as you can to Algiers," he went on. "I have had something new come into my life. Riding over the desert with my blind sister has done something to me. I have no idea of making you understand what it is. I do not plead for her. I do not plead for myself. I have no criticism to offer on you. But I want you to have the chance to do what is in your heart. I have never looked into your heart, Ernst Ferdinand Manteufel. I do not ask that you take this sightless child into your arms now. Only I want you to have the chance, and if you want her not, then give her to me.

"She is sitting now near me with her blind eyes directed against the sun. She is beautiful. I did not tell her who she is. That is for you to say when you come. But come, and do not let the Manteufel characteristics hold you for an instant! (Signed) FRIEDERICH MANTEUFEL."

At Perragaux he mailed the letter to Recamier's headquarters in Paris, that it might go straight to the coast and on from Oran to Malaga. The train



should have arrived at Algiers at six in the afternoon. Owing to the heavy traffic of supply trains going to Ath Sefra many delays occurred, despite the fact that orders had been issued to send the train bearing Manteufel through without delay. It was nine o'clock before Algiers was reached.

Moreau had arranged to dine his staff at his own house that night at seven in honor of the returning officer. When the telegraph instrument told him that the arrival was not possible until nine he had dined the men and sent them out on the veranda to smoke. He walked back and forth now in his study, resplendent in full uniform, his decorations strung across his chest.

"I never saw you so worked up before, Jean," Hortense Laborde said from her inevitable divan. "Do sit down. He will get here all right."

"I am fonder of that young rascal than you think for," Moreau answered. "Ah! here he comes. Hello! that is a coach. He must be ill. I sent his orderly with his mare to the station." The grating of a vehicle came up from the gravel road leading to the house. A moment later Fritz stepped into the room. He had not gone to his quarters to change his uniform, and stood now with his hand at his visor opposite the commander.

Moreau reached out his hand. "Thank God you are here, Fritz. Come sit in this big chair," Mo-



reau said with a little catch in his voice. "Tell me about yourself. Here, take some brandy." He poured some brandy from a caraffe standing together with three coffee cups on a taburet near Hortense's elbow.

Fritz remained standing. "Before I do anything, General Moreau, I want you to listen to the end of my tale. Later I will tell you of the fight."

Fritz, still standing, with the dust of the desert on his boots, in his hair, on his face, told his commander the tale. Moreau, too, stood up in the centre of the room, the light from the shaded bulb falling softly on his slowly setting face. He did not interrupt Fritz, but let him go on to the end. Only a deep fold appeared between the dark eyebrows, and when Fritz finished he passed his hand across his eyes as though he wished to see better.

The woman on the divan had risen to her elbow, as Fritz went on. They all stared mutely into each other's faces when the tale was done.

"And this child is here now in Algiers?" Moreau asked.

"She is in the coach at the door," Fritz answered.

"Lead her in, Fritz."

When Fritz brought her in, Moreau still stood in the centre of the room. The woman on the divan still rested on her elbow. Fritz held the child by the hand. She had an artillery officer's cape over her shoulders, covering the white gown. Her thick



brown hair hung somewhat disheveled about the rigid head.

Moreau went to her and took her by the hand and led her to the light. Her sightless eyeballs seemed to stare into space. Moreau silently looked at her placid face. "There is no doubt about it, Fritz," he said after a time, and he bent over and kissed her on the white smooth forehead.

"Orderly!" Moreau called loudly. The orderly appeared at the door. "My compliments to Colonel Majendi. I desire him to come here for a moment. You will find him on the veranda with the rest of the staff."

The woman on the divan rose. "You are tired, dear," she said, placing her hand on the girl's arm. "Come, here sit on this divan."

"I am not tired," the toneless voice answered.

"Are you not afraid to be with strangers?" Hortense asked. "Come, sit here. Let me take your cape." She led the girl to the divan.

"No, I am not afraid. I go where Friederich leads me."

Fritz stood yet erect, near the door frame. Not a muscle moved in his tense set face. Moreau stepped to the tabouret. "You will have some coffee, Fritz?" he asked. "Mademoiselle will have some, too. Come, I will put two pieces of sugar in for you both. It will help sweeten your problem for you."



Colonel Majendi appeared at the door. He was a heavily built man past middle life, with a square jaw and deep set dark eyes.

"Majendi," Moreau said, "look at that girl's eyes." Majendi led the girl to the light and removed the shade from the bulb. "She was born blind, I fancy," he said after a few moments. His voice broke the silence. Fritz had folded his arms as Majendi came in. Moreau had placed the sugar tongs on the tabouret and faced the center of the room.

"Yes," the girl answered. "I have never seen anything, sir. Your hands are strong, sir, I can feel your heart beat in your fingers."

"Hortense," Moreau said, "take Mademoiselle to the blue room. See that she is taken care of. Go."

The woman led the girl away.

"Can anything be done, Majendi?" Moreau asked. His voice was even and composed. Only a small bead of perspiration made a shimmer on his forehead close to the gray, carefully brushed hair.

"She has what is called congenital cataract," Majendi said after a pause. He lighted a cigarette. "An operation in the hands of an expert would restore her sight. I would not undertake it myself. If she were sent to Paris, Hartmann would no doubt succeed."



"Orderly," Moreau's sonorous powerful voice rang out, "My signal officer."

Again silence fell into the artfully lighted chamber. Neither Moreau nor Manteufel moved. The latter still stood near the door frame, with the dust of the desert on his faded blouse. Still he kept his arms folded over his chest.

Majendi smoked on. He had been appointed a staff surgeon from civil life. Before this he had been a scientist and worked in the hospitals. He had accepted the appointment on Moreau's staff because he wanted to be with Moreau. Then, too, he wanted a change. He got it in Algiers. Like all scientists, the emotional side of afflictions did not concern him. He sipped at the coffee from the cup nearest him, remaining standing, however, because the etiquette of his environment made it obligatory for him to remain standing as long as his chief did. On the whole he was bored and wanted to get back to his creme de menthe and the good stories that the Captain of Engineers out on the veranda knew how to tell.

The signal officer appeared.

"Clear the Paris wire," Moreau ordered steadily. "Get headquarters. Tell them I, Jean Baptiste Moreau, want Professor Hartmann to take a special for Marseilles tonight. He is to be prepared to operate for congenital cataract. He will find transportation at Marseilles. Then wire Marseilles to



hold the Dolphin until he arrives. See that he is met at the train. Keep me informed of the result and subsequent movements. You may go."

The signal officer withdrew. Moreau handed Fritz a coffee cup. The signal officer's horse could be heard galloping down the highway.

Fritz dropped his arms. Moreau still held the coffee cup toward him. "Come, Fritz. Let it sweeten the problem of life for you. Somewhere it is written that good will come from evil. We will let Majendi go back to his comrades, and you and I will talk together as I would have loved to talk to a son."



## CHAPTER XIII.

"You prefer to go to the Bishop yourself, Fritz?" Moreau asked with a faint smile. "He will come here if I send for him. You are impatient. You are barely rested from your journey, and Hartmann will be here tonight."

"I do not want any rest, nor do I want any special consideration shown this proposition. I do not want the church awed by display. I will go to the Bishop alone and he will do as I say."

"No doubt he will, Fritz." Moreau actually laughed. "Well, go and see him. I would suggest that you bear in mind that he probably had nothing to do with the thing, and also that if you smash his skull in, you will not have the excuse of self-defence to plead. Go ahead, my boy, and keep your temper."

As Fritz turned toward the door the orderly entered.

"Wire for Lieutenant Manteufel," he said handing Fritz the message. Fritz read it aloud. "Start on 'La Gascoyne' today for Havre. Ernest Manteufel."

"I hope he will love her," Fritz said, "and I hope she can see him when he comes."

"If that is your mood, you had better wait until



tomorrow to see the gentleman of cloth," Moreau answered with another smile. "I think you'd better take an absinthe."

"No, thank you, sir; I am off."

He strode toward the door, and a moment later lifted his mount into a gallop from rest. A tiny drop of blood fell from the flank to the white highway.

A thin pale man with closely cut black hair and unsteady eyes opened the door of the Bishop's residence and showed Fritz into a long darkened chamber furnished in black walnut and horse-hair furniture. "Whom shall I announce, Monsieur?" the man asked as though he feared to raise his voice.

"Tell your master that Friederich Manteufel of the general staff wishes to see him, and be quick about it."

"This is not His Grace's hour for seeing callers, sir," the man answered timidly. "Can you not come back at four o'clock?"

"I don't care a damn about his hours. Deliver my message, or I'll cut your ass's ears off."

The man withdrew. Fritz walked the floor, his heavy booted footfalls resounded through the foyer hall. Once his sabre scabbard knocked against an ebony pedestal holding a marble bust of Pius the Ninth. It knocked the stain off, revealing white wood beneath.

The Bishop came in. He held a trained canary



on the forefinger of his left hand. He walked almost noiselessly, yet carried his round little body with some grace. He was quite white haired and had deep set gray eyes and a broad nose. He was known as a benevolent kindly gentleman who followed the ritual and ate good dinners.

"You are one of the survivors of Oglat-Tuilla?" he said as he approached Fritz, who had turned sharply as he heard the faint footsteps come nearer.

"Yes, I am Lieutenant Manteufel. How much time can you give me?"

"As much as you need. I was about to dictate some letters to my secretary, but they can wait. Is your business urgent?"

"If you will sit down and make me feel less like an unwelcome visitor I'll tell you all about it."

The man who had let Fritz in passed the door.

"Here, Jules," the Bishop called, "take my little companion away." He handed the bird to the man, who hurriedly withdrew.

"Now, Monsieur, I am ready," the Bishop said, taking his place in a stiff-backed chair and folding his hands across the round little abdomen.

"After I retreated from Oglat-Tuilla," Fritz began, "I made Bou Aroua. I stayed at the convent. There was a woman there who acted as an organist. You know whom I mean?"

"Go on, Monsieur Manteufel," was the noncommittal answer.



"She is blind. I became interested in her. The factors which made me act as I did are none of your business. In the end I resolved to take her with me. There was a priest there, an Abbe Herrara, a Jesuit, a Spaniard. He told me that the girl is my half-sister. He did that to save her from a terrible fate. I believe he tells the truth. I know there is some queer history to this. I have sent for my father—this girl's father. He is coming to Algiers. I want that Herrara here when he comes. And I want the whole story here in this room, from his own lips, if I have to choke it out of him."

The Bishop listened quietly. He raised his hand now.

"You are hasty, my friend," he said. "There must have been some good reason for this. The church is infallible, yet its servants err at times. I will look into this matter. The church is always just. If you have a grievance it will be taken care of."

"I don't care anything about the adjudications of the church. I want this swine of a Herrara brought here to wait until Ernest Manteufel arrives. If there be any procrastination about it I'll go after him myself and drag him here by the slack of that ill fitting cossack of his."

The Bishop did not answer at once. The deep set eyes took on an intent expression.

"Did you hear me?" Fritz said menacingly. "By



God, Moreau will make such havoc as never was unless you do as I say."

"Has the department commander been informed of this?" the Bishop asked, with slightly accentuated intonation of voice.

"He has, but I do not hold that over your head. I withdraw that. I'll take care of this proposition myself."

"Calm yourself, Monsieur Manteufel. The Abbe Herrara will be sent for at once. The matter will be cleared up. Compose yourself."

"I am composed," Fritz said. He looked it with his handsome clear eyes looking straight at the little figure in its black colored chair. "Write the message. I will forward it over the Government wire."

The Bishop wrote the message and Fritz swung into the saddle. In a few moments he rushed into Moreau's study and waved the paper high over his head.



## CHAPTER XIV.

THE gangplank met the "Dolphin's" companion-way. Friederich Manteufel stood very still, very erect, very properly uniformed, from the shining visor to the polished spur. Ernest Ferdinand Manteufel stepped lightly to the pier. The gray of the temples had slid over the entire head and engulfed the beard and moustache. The shoulders were just as square, the eyes just as clear, and the defiant, well posed figure just as well groomed in gray as it was eighteen years before.

Fritz's gauntlet went to his visor. The elder man removed his hat and held out his hand encased in a gray silk glove.

"I have the honor to greet you, sir. I welcome you to Algiers," Fritz said without moving his eyes from the elder man's face. The men's eyes were quite on a level.

"Thank you, Monsieur le Lieutenant," the elder man replied.

"Shall we gain terra firma? I still hear the gurgle of water under my feet." He replaced his hat. Fritz led him to the waiting coach.

The elder man drew back as they reached the coach, the door of which was held open by Moreau's



own orderly resplendent in white duck and freshly polished boots.

"Allow me," Fritz said with the least touch of stiffness in his speech. He motioned to the elder man to enter and stepped in after him. "To the Commander's residence," he ordered the boy.

Ernest Ferdinand Manteufel extracted a cigarette from a very flat gold case which had a coat of arms in blue enamel on it. "You will have a cigarette, yes?" he asked with that occasional touch of Germanism which neither time nor education ever quite obliterates. "Or do you not smoke in uniform in the view of the public?"

"Algiers is more tolerant than Berlin, sir," Fritz answered. He struck a match on the hilt of his sabre and held it while the elder fired his cigarette. The posture gave him an opportunity to study the face beside him more closely. It was as composed as though its bearer had just stepped out of his dressing-room to go to dinner.

"I have told my man to await my orders on board," Ernst Manteufel said. "Where do we drive to?"

"Orderly," Fritz called to the soldier who had mounted beside the driver, "go back to the steamer. Find Dr. Manteufel's man. Tell him to arrange the baggage to be sent to General Moreau's home. Then bring him there yourself."

The orderly saluted and dismounted.



"Is this girl at General Moreau's home?" Dr. Manteufel asked.

"Yes, sir."

"I would prefer to have her identity cleared up technically before I see her."

"That has been arranged for. The interview at the Bishop's house is at eight o'clock. We dine at seven. Though the girl's eyes have entirely healed, she does not dine with us."

"Very well, that will do. The last letter from you which I found at Paris, tells me that Hartmann has succeeded. He is an able operator. However, if she had congenital cataract, this should not have presented any difficult surgical problem. Most of those cases do well when they are properly handled. Has Hartmann gone back to Paris?"

"Yes, sir. He left this morning. He asked me to give you his best regards."

"I imagine this Algerian experience has done you good, Monsieur le Lieutenant," Ernst Manteufel said next. The coach drove near some enormous white lilies growing close beside the road. The speaker threw his cigarette at one of the flowers and it fell into the open petals. He laughed quite loudly, throwing back his head. "It is a great thing to hit what you aim at," he said. "Only don't aim too high. It costs too much to make the projectile reach."

Fritz sat silently in the smoothly running coach,



the sabre between his legs, his hands folded over the hilt, looking fixedly ahead.

The coach turned into the gate at the Commander's residence. Moreau stood at the head of the steps, in immaculate white pique, with only the decoration of the Legion of Honor around his neck.

"I have the honor to welcome you to Algiers, sir," he said in his quiet even voice as he shook hands with his guest.

He led the men to his favorite corner of the veranda, with its striped awning and wicker furniture.

Ernst Ferdinand Manteufel lighted a fresh cigarette, and sipped cold absinthe as he watched the slanting sun rays play on the ripples of the Mediterranean intermittently visible through the foliage.

"It is half after six, Doctor Manteufel," Moreau said after a time. "Your luggage must be in your room by this time. I have had my adjutant see to the customs." He clapped his hands and ordered the butler to show his guest to his room. Moreau and Fritz rose as the elder man left. Fritz remained standing for some time, a tall unbending figure outlined against the green foliage.

"Sit down, Fritz," Moreau said. "Be patient. The man is confronted with something. A man who, on such an errand, talks about the mechanism of the engines that brought him four thousand



miles, never forgets to tie his necktie accurately. You have much to learn yet."

"I wanted just one gentle word. I wanted just to have him put his hand on my knee when the damned coach lurched around a corner. I wanted to catch a more softly attuned note in that magnificent clear voice of his. General Moreau, none of these happened. I tremble for the end. He looks always past me. As if he saw something more than I can see."

"I love you for that, Fritz. Yet be patient, and come have another absinthe."

At precisely fifteen minutes before seven Doctor Manteufel presented himself in the General's study, in full evening dress, the decoration of Bolivar around his neck.

Moreau presented him to Hortense Laborde. Doctor Manteufel touched his lips with her wrist.

At seven dinner was served. Doctor Manteufel carried the brunt of the conversation and carried it well. He talked with equal ease of military problems, of the best method of icing champagne, of the winner of the Derby, of art, of literature. Never did he fall short of a brilliant answer. Never did he fail to make an adroit remark.

At ten minutes to eight the men drove to the Bishop's house. The man with the closely cropped black hair and the deeply set shifting eyes opened



the door. He led the three men into a little study opposite the large long room in which Fritz had had his first interview.

The room was quite dark save for a green shaded lamp which stood on the edge of a large square mahogany desk standing in the centre of the room. The room had a bay window opening out on the lawn and the evening breeze from the water blew the simple net curtains toward the interior. A large comfortable divan rested along one wall and several heavy upholstered chairs were placed about in various positions.

In a few moments the Bishop entered, his round smooth face a little pale. "The Abbe Herrara will be here in a moment," he began in his soft gentle voice. "Be seated, gentlemen. This is a most distressing affair. I must say I have been quite disturbed. Do be seated, Monsieur Lieutenant Manteufel," he said turning to Fritz, who stood leaning against the window frame. "The matter will be ended to the satisfaction of all. Please, I beg of you, Monsieur le Commandant, this is very painful to me—I have no doubt to all of us."

"Permit me to present to you Monsieur le Doctor Ernst Ferdinand Manteufel," Moreau said quietly.

Ernst Manteufel bowed. "I do not wish to cause you any annoyance," the elder man said with much the same method of expression he had used at Moreau's dinner table. "However, it seems to me that



this is not a question of your distress. It is merely an inquiry regarding certain facts which we want to clear up. I hope Monsieur Herrara will not delay very long."

That moment the Abbe Herrara came in. His tall figure had become still more gaunt. The tan of his cheek had faded to a pale yellow, and his shoulders had become more bent. He stood now just within the threshold facing the three men—Moreau erect, placid, immovable, Ernst Ferdinand Manteufel composed, impassive, with the faint tropical breeze barely disturbing the wisps of hair at his temples, Fritz dark browed with glittering ominous eyes standing higher than all the rest now, in his indignation, yet resting quietly his begauntleted hand on the back of the velour chair beside the window. For a moment neither spoke. The little Bishop played nervously with the fringe of the silk piece under the lamp.

"Come nearer, Monsieur le Abbe Herrara," Doctor Manteufel said, "I fancy you know who I am."

The priest stepped slightly forward, but he did not answer.

"You hear what I say, do you not, Monsieur le Abbe?" Doctor Manteufel went on.

"Yes, Monsieur Manteufel," Herrara answered, almost in a whisper. "I hear you well enough." The light from the lamp fell more strongly on his face. The great luminous eyes caught the light.



"What was the name of the mother of this girl?" Doctor Manteufel asked, still quiet in his voice, yet no menace in his pose.

"Her name was Agnes Vanderlyn," the priest answered, more clearly now. "She died at Fos, on the shore of the Mediterranean. She told me her tale. I offer no apology for what I did. The child was conceived in sin. I took her for the Lord. I took her away. I took her with her affliction to peace and rest."

"Never mind that," Doctor Manteufel put in. "Did the woman tell you that I was the father of her child? That's what I want to know. Answer yes, or no."

"Yes. She did. She told it to me with the hand of death upon her. She did not lie. She begged me to take her child to another country, away from where anyone would know. I took her. I carried the burden of your sin, Ernst Ferdinand Manteufel. I taught her the way. I saw her grope her blind way year after year, from babyhood on, until I felt the music in her and I taught her to wrest those tuneful notes from inanimate keys which you, Friederich Manteufel, heard in her desert home." He stepped now to the centre of the room. The stooping shoulders straightened up, the glorious luminous eyes shone in the half light. "And she has been mine for all these years, mine to teach,



mine to see grow to womanhood, mine to guide her sightless life, to mold it as I wished, until you, Friederich Manteufel, with your drunken feet, with the blood of battle on your uniform, strode ruthlessly into her life and took her away. It was you, Friederich Manteufel, who broke into her life and dragged her away on the pommel of your saddle, to the end from which I would have saved her. Where do you lead her to? Tell me where?" He turned to the elder man. "Where can you lead her to, with her accursed heritage, under the guidance of your sinful life? The mother did not have her because of you, Ernst Ferdinand Manteufel. She had her because she wanted to bear a child unmarred by the affliction of her first born, and you came to curse the second still more. And I would take her now again. I ask you, her father, to give her back to me, not as a priest, but as a man, and I will take her again to another country, even as her mother pleaded, to where no one will know. I will repudiate my vows, I will take her for myself, for myself, and I will lead her blind life until the end. You can not want her. You can not lead her."

Not until then did the men move. Not until then did Friederich Manteufel move his spurred boot.

Moreau reached out his hand. "One moment, Fritz." He toyed with the decoration on his breast.

"Do you know that the girl can see now? Do



you know that you kept her sightless for eighteen years when she could have been made to see?" Moreau asked.

"Did you know that all through these eighteen years?" Dr. Manteufel asked at last, with a ring in his voice. "Did you know that you took from me the right to formulate her life? Did you know the sin was not that of the dead mother, not mine, but that it was the sin of the church when it robbed her of the right to bear a healthy child? Did you know that when it said 'No, you must go on as we have ordained,' that the church made the harlot and its servant the tool for a greater crime?"

"No, I did not know her sight had been restored," Herrara answered in a whisper. His shoulders drooped again, and the thin white fingers fumbled shakily at the buttons of his cossack. "She would not go with me now. I am an old man. But," again he drew himself up as high as he could with the haggard eyes staring full into the elder Manteufel's face. "I withdraw nothing that I said. I love her. I love her. I love her. I am not ashamed of it. If I spend the rest of time expiating it I will say it again and again. I love her, Ernst Ferdinand Manteufel. I love her, Friederich Manteufel. I love her, Monsieur le Commandant Jean Baptiste Moreau. I love her, Monsieur Bishop Raguet. I will love her until the end of time. Take her off; take her with your uniforms and your decorations.



I alone could have saved her soul. Only because I loved her could she have been saved the curse I see written on your faces—you of the Manteufel race! When you, Friederich Manteufel, kissed her blind face in the chapel you escaped with your life by a miracle. I had no weapon. That night I stole to your room. I waited for you to sleep. I was ready to kill you. Kill you like a dog.” He walked over to Friederich Manteufel, who stood yet by the window with his begauntleted hand on the back of the chair. “But you moved every time I touched the door. When you choked me with your hands I would have given all my hope of ultimate salvation to be able to strangle you to death. Take her then. Take her, take her——”

Friederich Manteufel raised his right hand and struck him to the floor. He lay on his side with his face turned toward the elder man. Blood trickled down from a wound in his forehead to the green carpet.

“Yes, you are an accursed race, you Manteufels. Go, look in the mirror; look at yourselves, both of you, with the stamp of the fallen god on your faces. Go look at yourselves. Look at the demon lines in every feature. Strut on in your ruthless fashion, but your sins will find you out.” He sank down and buried his face in the bend of his elbow.

“Come, let us go,” Moreau said.



The Bishop bent down and lifted the unconscious man's head on his knee.

"I would like to see her tonight, if it be feasible," Ernst Manteufel said, as the three men mounted to Moreau's veranda.

They had driven home in silence. Moreau rigid in his seat opposite the two Manteufels, the latter silently staring out to the moonlit road.

"I will take you to her," Fritz answered.

The foyer was dark and as the younger man stepped forward the elder placed his hand on his shoulder. Fritz stopped. "I will turn up the light if you wish," Fritz said, afraid to move lest the hand on his shoulder might slip away.

"No, show me the way, Fritz," the elder man answered.

"The steps make a turn here," Fritz went on. The elder man slipped on the edge of a step. Fritz caught him quickly under the armpit.

"Thank you," the elder man said, "it is a new sensation to be held up like that."

She was seated in a big chair beside a shaded electric drop light. She had bent forward as she heard the men's heavy footfalls on the stairs. A light blue kimona fell loosely over her strong young figure. One white slender hand grasped the arm of the chair. A nurse in a white and blue striped gown and white cap held her hand on her shoulder as though holding her down. A pair of amber eye-



glasses lay on the table glittering like two giant topazes in the zone of light from the bulb. She moved her shoulders with her head as Fritz stepped toward her, the habit of eighteen years of sightless life.

Fritz took her by the hand and raised her up.

"This is Leah Vanderlyn, father," he said turning to the man who stood just within the door, in semi-darkness, silent, pale for once, with dark deep lines under his gray still eyes. Fritz put his arm around the girl's waist, and turned her slightly toward the light.

"You are Friederich's father?" the girl began, with yet the unvarying pitch of voice of the blind. "I can see you very well where you stand. You are like Friederich. I will love you as I love Friederich." She looked up into her half-brother's face.

Ernst Manteufel came nearer. He reached out and took the girl by the hand and drew her to him. She placed her head on his shoulder and he bent down and kissed her on the thick light brown hair.

"I will take you with me. To my home over the sea. I will show you the way that you might tread it unguided by other eyes. Will you come?"

"Yes," the girl answered with an added note in her voice. "And Friederich, he comes, too."

The elder man looked over the girl's head at the tall young lieutenant of cavalry.

"I, too, will come, and perhaps you will slip



again somewhere, and perhaps I will be near enough to hold you that you might not fall," Fritz said.

Ernst Ferdinand Manteufel took the youth by the hand, and thus with one in either hand turned them to the light. "Yes. It is true," he muttered. "They both have the Manteufel mark."



## CHAPTER XV.

THE August night bore heavily on the great city of New York, with its deserted thoroughfares, except for an occasional hansom or a taxicab laden with gaily attired women and men in evening clothes and straw hats whose wives were lolling away the heated term at the seashore or mountains.

Three men in dinner coats turned into Fifth Avenue from Fifty-ninth Street and walked leisurely south toward the glare.

"I don't know when I've enjoyed an evening so much as this one, Fritz," one of the men said, turning toward the taller of the trio, who walked nearest the curb. "You must have had a great time in Algiers."

"It is only a memory now, Morton," Fritz said. "You see it is five years ago, and time is a great diluent to human emotions."

Freiderich Manteufel's arrogant face had undergone some softening since the day he so impudently rode out under the Algerian stars with the organist on the pommel of his saddle. He walked with the same self-reliant carriage, still carried his handsome head erect on the dominant shoulders, yet the light from the arc lamps along the avenue fell on eyes that gazed less provokingly at what they saw.



"You have never heard from your foster sister, Manteufel?" the other asked.

"No, Jack, I never did. It is three years since she disappeared. Dad still wanders about looking into women's faces with the hope that she will loom up again from somewhere. I have given it up."

They walked on in silence. At Forty-sixth Street they paused at a shop window to look at some diamonds displayed in a glass case. It was very hot and close, and as they turned to resume their journey Fritz removed his hat.

"It's strange how the hair at your temples always stands off from your head, Fritz," Morton said. He brushed his finger tips against his friend's temple, but the rebellious hair sprang out almost as soon as he released it.

The shadows from the three men fell on the walk, making three silhouettes of varying size. Manteufel's shadow reached farther than the rest.

Morton placed his hand on Manteufel's arm. "See," he said, pointing at the shadows, "it makes yours look as though you had little horns. Queer, isn't it?"

Manteufel did not answer at once. They walked on to Forty-second Street, and beside the library which was already pushing its white facade over the top of the old reservoir wall.

"I have often noticed the peculiarity you speak of," Fritz said at last. "If I were superstitious I



would regard its manifestation as an evil omen."

A tall well-made woman appeared under an arc light at some distance from the men. She walked well and as she drew nearer she drew up her skirt, outlining well-booted feet. She drew nearer, passing into a deeper gloom and then approached the men. She had luxurious light brown hair and wore glasses which shimmered for a moment in the light from the arc light near the two. She sidled toward them as she came nearer.

"Are you out for a good time?" she said when she was quite opposite them.

Manteufel gave a short quick gasp, raised his hand to his hat, let it fall and went on.

"I hope he never does find her," he muttered. Then more loudly. "Come, we will go to Martin's and have a night-cap. I am tired and want to get some rest. I think I will induce my tired dad to go away for a time."

In a convent room at Bou Aroua a haggard, white-haired priest stood leaning a bent figure over the window sill, looking out on the moonlit never-ending desert.

An owl flew aslant the moon rays. It circled close to the window, poised for a moment in mid-air. Its wings threw a shadow on the silvery sand. It flew on, skirting the glittering cross on the dome of the main building and winged into the distance.

FINIS.











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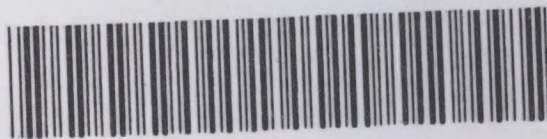


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